LETTERS

CONCERNING

The ENGLISH Nation.

BY

Mr. DE VOLTAIRE.

A NEW EDITION

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THE PREFACE.

THE present work appears with confidence in the kingdom that gave birth to it; and will be well satisfied with its fortune, if it meets with as favourable a reception as has been indulged to all the other compositions of its author. The high esteem which Mr. de Voltaire has always discovered for the English, is a proof how ambitious he is for their approbation. It is now grown familiar to him, but then he is not tired with it; and indeed one would be apt to think that this circumstance is pleasing to the nation, from the strong desire they have to peruse whatever is published under his name.

Without pretending therefore to any great penetration, we may ven-

ture to affirm that his letters will meet with all the ſucceſs that could be wiſhed. Mr. de Voltaire is the author of them, they were written in London, and relate particularly to the Engliſh nation; three circumſtances which muſt neceſſarily recommend them. The great freedom with which Mr. de Voltaire delivers himſelf in his various obſervations, cannot give him any apprehenſions of their being leſs favourably received upon that account, by a judicious people who abhor flattery. The Engliſh are pleaſed to have their faults pointed out to them, becauſe this ſhews at the ſame time, that the writer is able to diſtinguiſh their merit.

We muſt however confeſs, that theſe letters were not deſigned for the public. They are the reſult of the author's complacency and friendſhip for Mr. Thiriot, who had deſired him, during his ſtay in England,

to favour him with ſuch remarks as he might make on the manners and cuſtoms of the Britiſh nation. 'Tis well known that in a correſpondence of this kind, the moſt juſt and regular writer does not propoſe to obſerve any method. Mr. de Voltaire in all probability followed no other rule in the choice of his ſubjects than his particular taſte, or perhaps the queries of his friend. Be this as it will, 'twas thought that the moſt natural order in which they could be placed, would be that of their reſpective dates. Several particulars which are mentioned in them make it neceſſary for us to obſerve, that they were written between the latter end of 1728, and about 1731. The only thing that can be regreted on this occaſion is, that ſo agreeable a correſpondence ſhould have continued no longer.

The reader will no doubt obſerve, that the circumſtances in every let-

ter which had not an immediate relation to the title of it, have been omitted. This was done on purpoſe; for letters written with the confidence and ſimplicity of perſonal friendſhip, generally include certain things which are not proper for the preſs. The publick indeed thereby often loſe a great many agreeable particulars; but why ſhould they complain if the want of them is compenſated by a thouſand beauties of another kind? The variety of the ſubjects, the graces of the diction, the ſolidity of the reflections, the delicate turn of the criticiſm; in fine, the noble fire, which enlivens all the compoſitions of Mr de Voltaire, delight the reader perpetually. Even the moſt ſerious letters, ſuch as thoſe which relate to Sir Iſaac Newton's philoſophy, will be found entertaining. The author has infuſed into his ſubject all the delicate touches it was ſuſceptible of; deep and abſtruſe

enough to ſhew that he was maſter of it, and always perſpicuous enough to be underſtood.

Some of the Engliſh readers may perhaps be diſſatisfied at his not expatiating farther on their conſtitution and their laws, which moſt of them revere almoſt to idolatry; but this reſervedneſs is an effect of Mr. de Voltaire's judgment. He contented himſelf with giving his opinion of them in general reflections, the caſt of which is entirely new, and which prove that he had made this part of the Britiſh polity his particular ſtudy. Beſides, how was it poſſible for a foreigner to pierce thro' their politics, that gloomy labyrinth, in which ſuch of the Engliſh themſelves as are beſt acquainted with it, confeſs daily that they are bewildered and loſt?

LETTERS

CONCERNING THE

ENGLISH NATION.

LETTER I.

OF THE QUAKERS.

I WAS of opinion, that the doctrine and hiſtory of ſo extraordinary a people were worthy the attention of the curious. To acquaint myſelf with them, I made a viſit to one of the moſt eminent Quaker in England, who after having traded thirty years had the wiſdom to preſcribe limits to his fortune and to his deſires, and was ſettled in a little ſolitude not far from London. Being come into it, I perceived a ſmall, but regularly built houſe, vaſtly neat, but without the leaſt pomp

of furniture. The Quaker, who owned it, was a hale ruddy complexioned old man, who had never been afflicted with ſickneſs, becauſe he had always been inſenſible to paſſions, and a perfect ſtranger to intemperance. I never in my life ſaw a more noble or a more engaging aſpect than his. He was dreſſed like thoſe of his perſuaſion, in a plain coat, without plaits in the ſides, or buttons on the pockets and ſleeves; and had on a beaver, the brims of which were horizontal, like thoſe of our clergy. He did not uncover himſelf when I appeared, and advanced towards me without once ſtooping his body; but there appeared more politeneſs in the open, humane air of his countenance, than in the cuſtom of drawing one leg behind the other, and taking that from the head which is made to cover it. Friend, ſays he to me, I perceive thou art a ſtranger, but if I can do any thing for thee, only tell me. Sir, ſays I to him, bending forwards, and advancing, as is uſual with us, one leg towards him, I flatter myſelf that my juſt curioſity will not give you the leaſt offence, and that you will do me the honour to inform me of the particulars of your religion. The people of thy country, replied the Quaker, are too full of their bows and compliments, but I never met with any of them who had ſo much curioſity as thyſelf. Come in, and let us firſt dine together. I ſtill continued to make ſome unſeaſonable ceremonies,

it not being eaſy to diſengage one's ſelf at once from habits we have been long uſed to; and after taking part of a frugal meal, which began and ended with a prayer to God, I began to queſtion my courteous hoſt. I opened with that which good Catholics have more than once made to Huguenots. My dear Sir, ſays I, were you ever baptized? I never was, replied the Quaker, nor any of my brethren. Zouns, ſays I to him, you are not Chriſtians then. Friend, replies the old man in a ſoft tone of voice, ſwear not; we are Chriſtians, and endeavour to be good Chriſtians, but we are not of opinion, that the ſprinkling water on a child's head makes him a Chriſtian. Heavens! ſays I, ſhocked at his impiety, you have then forgot that Chriſt was baptized by St. John. Friend, replies the mild Quaker once again, ſwear not. Chriſt indeed was baptized by John, but he himſelf never baptized any one. We are the diſciples of Chriſt, not of John. I pitied very much the ſincerity of my worthy Quaker, and was abſolutely for forcing him to get himſelf chriſtened. Were that all, replied he very gravely, we would ſubmit chearfully to baptiſm, purely in compliance with thy weakneſs, for we do not condemn any perſon who uſes it; but then we think, that thoſe who profeſs a religion of ſo holy, ſo ſpiritual a nature as that of Chriſt, ought to abſtain to the utmoſt of their power from the Jewiſh ceremonies. O

unaccountable! ſays I, what? baptiſm a Jewiſh ceremony? Yes, my friend. ſays he, ſo truly Jewiſh that a great many Jews uſe the baptiſm of John to this day. Look into ancient authors, and thou wilt find that John only revived this practice; and that it had been uſed by the Hebrews, long before his time, in like manner as the Mahometans imitated the Iſhmaelites in their pilgrimages to Mecca. Jeſus indeed ſubmitted to the baptiſm of John, as he had ſuffered himſelf to be circumciſed; but circumciſion and the waſhing with water ought to be aboliſhed by the baptiſm of Chriſt, that baptiſm of the ſpirit, that ablution of the ſoul, which is the ſalvation of mankind. Thus the forerunner ſaid, "I indeed baptize you with water "unto repentance; but he that cometh after "me, is mightier than I, whoſe ſhoes I am "not worthy to bear; he ſhall baptize you "with the Holy Ghoſt and with fire *." Likewiſe Paul, the great apoſtle of the Gentiles, writes as follows to the Corinthians; "Chriſt ſent "me not to baptize, but to preach the goſ"pel †;" and indeed Paul never baptized but two perſons with water, and that very much againſt his inclinations. He circumciſed his diſciple Timothy, and the other diſciples likewiſe circumciſed all who were willing to ſubmit to that carnal ordinance. But art thou circum-

* St. Matth. iii. 11. † 1 Cor. i. 17.

ciſed, added he? I have not the honour to be ſo, ſays I. Well, friend, continues the Quaker, thou art a Chriſtian without being circumciſed, and I am one without being baptiſed. Thus did this pious man make a wrong, but very ſpecious, application, of four or five texts of ſcripture which ſeemed to favour the tenets of his ſect; but at the ſame time forgot very ſincerely an hundred texts which made directly againſt them. I had more ſenſe than to conteſt with him, ſince there is no poſſibility of convincing an enthuſiaſt. A man ſhould never pretend to inform a lover of his miſtreſs's faults, no more than one who is at law, of the badneſs of his cauſe; nor attempt to win over a fanatic by ſtrength of reaſoning. Accordingly I waved the ſubject.

Well, ſays I to him, what ſort of a communion have you? We have none like that thou hinteſt at among us, replied he. How! no communion, ſays I? Only that ſpiritual one, replied he, of hearts. He then began again to throw out his texts of ſcripture; and preached a moſt elegant ſermon againſt that ordinance. He haranged in a tone as though he had been inſpired, to prove that the ſacraments were merely of human invention, and that the word ſacrament was not once mentioned in the goſpel. Excuſe, ſays he, my ignorance, for I have not employed the hundredth part of the arguments which might be brought, to prove the

truth of our religion; but these thou thyself mayst peruse in the exposition of our faith written by Robert Barclay. It is one of the best pieces that ever was penned by man; and as our adversaries confess it to be of dangerous tendency, the arguments in it must necessarily be very convincing. I promised to peruse this piece, and my Quaker imagined he had already made a convert of me. He afterwards gave me an account, in few words, of some singularities which make this sect the contempt of others. Confess, says he, that it was very difficult for thee to refrain from laughter, when I answered all thy civilities without uncovering my head, and at the same time said *thee* and *thou* to thee. However, thou appearest to me too well read, not to know that in Christ's time no nation was so ridiculous as to put the plural number for the singular. Augustus Caesar himself was spoke to in such phrases as these, "I love thee, I beseech thee, "I thank thee;" but he did not allow any person to call him Domine, Sir. It was not till many ages after, that men would have the word You, as though they were double, instead of Thou, employed in speaking to them; and usurped the flattering titles of lordship, of eminence, and of holiness, which mere worms bestow on other worms, by assuring them that they are with a most profound respect, and an infamous falshood, their most obedient, hum-

ble ſervants. It is to ſecure ourſelves more ſtrongly from ſuch a ſhameleſs traffic of lies and flattery, that we *thee* and *thou* a king with the ſame freedom as we do a beggar, and ſalute no perſon; we owing nothing to mankind but charity, and to the laws reſpect and obedience.

Our apparel is alſo ſomewhat different from that of others, and this purely, that it may be a perpetual warning to us not to imitate them. Others wear the badges and marks of their ſeveral dignities, and we thoſe of chriſtian humility. We fly from all aſſemblies of pleaſure, from diverſions of every kind, and from places where gaming is practiſed; and indeed our caſe would be very deplorable, ſhould we fill with ſuch levities, as thoſe I have mentioned, the heart which ought to be the habitation of God. We never ſwear, not even in a court of juſtice, being of opinion that the moſt holy name of God ought not to be proſtituted in the miſerable conteſts betwixt man and man. When we are obliged to appear before a magiſtrate upon other people's account, (for lawſuits are unknown among the friends) we give evidence to the truth by ſealing it with our yea or nay; and the judges believe us on our bare affirmation, whilſt ſo many other Chriſtians forſwear themſelves on the holy goſpels. We never war or fight in any caſe; but it is not that we are afraid; for ſo far from ſhuddering at the thoughts of death, we, on the contrary, bleſs

the moment that unites us with the being of beings; but the reaſon of our not uſing the outward ſword is, that we are neither wolves, tigers, nor maſtiffs, but men and Chriſtians. Our God, who has commanded us to love our enemies, and to ſuffer without repining, would certainly not permit us to croſs the ſeas merely becauſe murderers cloathed in ſcarlet, and wearing caps two foot high, enliſt citizens by a noiſe made with two little ſticks on an aſs's ſkin extended. And when after a victory is gained, the whole city of London is illuminated: when the ſky is in a blaze with fireworks, and a noiſe is heard in the air, of thankſgivings, of bells, of organs, and of the cannon, we groan in ſilence, and are deeply affected with ſadneſs of ſpirit and brokenneſs of heart, for the ſad havoc which is the occaſion of thoſe public rejoicings.

LETTER II.

OF THE QUAKERS.

SUCH was the ſubſtance of the converſation I had with this very ſingular perſon; but I was greatly ſurprized to ſee him come the Sunday following, and take me with him to the Quakers meeting. There are ſeveral of theſe in London, but that which he carried me to ſtands near the famous pillar called the monument. The brethren were already aſſembled at my entering it with my guide. There might be about four hundred men and three hundred women in the meeting. The women hid their faces behind their fans, and the men were covered with their broad-brimed hats; all were ſeated, and the ſilence was univerſal. I paſt through them, but did not perceive ſo much as one lift up his eyes to look at me. This ſilence laſted a quarter of an hour, when at laſt one of them roſe up, took off his hat, and after making a variety of wry faces, and groaning in a moſt lamentable manner, he partly from his noſe, and partly from his mouth, threw out a ſtrange confuſed jumble of words (borrowed as he imagined from the goſpel) which neither himſelf nor any of his hearers underſtood.

When this diſtorter had ended his beautiful ſoliloquy, and that the ſtupid, but greatly edified, congregation were ſeparated, I aſked my friend how it was poſſible for the judicious part of their aſſembly to ſuffer ſuch a babbling. We are obliged, ſays he, to ſuffer it, becauſe no one knows when a man riſes up to hold forth, whether he will be moved by the ſpirit or by folly. In this doubt and uncertainty we liſten patiently to every one, we even allow our women to hold forth; two or three of theſe are often inſpired at one and the ſame time, and it is then that a moſt charming noiſe is heard in the Lord's houſe. You have then no prieſts, ſays I to him? No, no, friend, replies the Quaker, to our great happineſs. Then opening one of the friend's books, as he called it, he read the following words in an emphatic tone: God forbid we ſhould preſume to ordain any one to receive the holy ſpirit on the Lord's day, to the prejudice of the reſt of the brethren. Thanks to the Almighty, we are the only people upon earth that have no prieſts. Wouldſt thou deprive us of ſo happy a diſtinction? Why ſhould we abandon our babe to mercenary nurſes, when we ourſelves have milk enough for it? Theſe mercenary creatures would ſoon domineer in our houſes and deſtroy both the mother and the babe. God has ſaid, Freely you have received, freely give. Shall we, after theſe words, cheapen, as it were, the

goſpel; ſell the Holy Ghoſt, and make of an aſſembly of Chriſtians a mere ſhop of traders? We do not pay a ſet of men cloathed in black, to aſſiſt our poor, to bury our dead, or to preach to the brethren; theſe offices are all of too tender a nature, for us ever to truſt them to others. But how is it poſſible for you, ſays I, with ſome warmth, to know whether your diſcourſe is really inſpired by the Almighty? Whoſoever, ſays he, ſhall implore Chriſt to enlighten him, and ſhall publiſh the goſpel truths he may feel inwardly, ſuch an one may be aſſured that he is inſpired by the Lord. He then poured forth a numberleſs multitude of ſcripture texts, which proved, as he imagined, that there is no ſuch thing as Chriſtianity without an immediate revelation, and added theſe remarkable words: When thou moveſt one of thy limbs, is it moved by thy own power? Certainly not, for this limb is often ſenſible to involuntary motions; conſequently he, who created thy body, gives motion to this earthly tabernacle. And are the ſeveral ideas of which thy ſoul receives the impreſſion formed by thy ſelf? Much leſs are they, ſince theſe pour in upon thy mind whether thou wilt or no; conſequently thou receiveſt thy ideas from him who created thy ſoul: but as he leaves the affections at full liberty, he gives thy mind ſuch ideas as thy affections may deſerve; if thou liveſt in God, thou acteſt, thou thinkeſt in God.

After this thou needeſt only but open thine eyes to that light which enlightens all mankind, and it is then thou wilt perceive the truth, and make others perceive it. Why this, ſays I, is Malebranche's doctrine to a tittle. I am acquainted with thy Malebranche, ſays he; he had ſomething of the friend in him, but was not enough ſo.

Theſe are the moſt conſiderable particulars I learn'd concerning the doctrine of the Quakers: in my next letter I ſhall acquaint you with their hiſtory, which you will find more ſingular than their opinions.

LETTER III.

OF THE QUAKERS.

YOU have already heard that the Quakers date from Chriſt, who according to them was the firſt Quaker. Religion, ſay theſe, was corrupted a little after his death, and remained in that ſtate of corruption about 1600 years. But there were always a few Quakers concealed in the world, who carefully preſerved the ſacred fire, which was extinguiſhed in all but themſelves, till at laſt this light ſpread itſelf in England in 1642.

It was at the time when Great Britain was torn to pieces by the inteſtine wars, which three or four ſects had raiſed in the name of God, that one George Fox, born in Leiceſterſhire, and ſon to a ſilk-weaver, took it into his head to preach; and as he pretended, with all the requiſites of a true apoſtle, that is, without being able either to read or write. He was about twenty five * years of age, irreproachable in his life and conduct, and a holy madman. He was equipt in leather from head to foot, and travelled from one village to another, exclaiming againſt war and the clergy. Had his

* Fox could read at that age.

invectives been levelled againſt the ſoldiery only, he would have been ſafe enough; but he inveighed againſt eccleſiaſtics. Fox was ſeized at Derby, and being carried before a juſtice of peace, he did not once offer to pull off his leathern hat; upon which an officer gave him a great box on the ear, and cried to him, do not you know you are to appear uncover'd before his worſhip? Fox preſented his other cheek to the officer, and begged him to give him another box for God's ſake. The juſtice would have had him ſworn before he aſked him any queſtions: Know, friend, ſays Fox to him, that I never ſwear. The juſtice obſerving he *thee'd* and *thou'd* him, ſent him to the houſe of correction in Derby, with orders that he ſhould be whipp'd there. Fox praiſed the Lord all the way he went to the houſe of correction, where the juſtice's order was executed with the utmoſt ſeverity. The men, who whipped this enthuſiaſt, were greatly ſurprized to hear him beſeech them to give him a few more laſhes for the good of his ſoul. There was no need of intreating theſe people; the laſhes were repeated, for which Fox thanked them very cordially, and began to preach. At firſt the ſpectators fell a laughing, but they afterwards liſtened to him; and as enthuſiaſm is an epidemical diſtemper, many were perſuaded, and thoſe who ſcourged him became his firſt diſciples. Being ſet at liberty, he ran up and

down the country with a dozen proſelytes at his heels, ſtill declaiming againſt the clergy, and was whipped from time to time. Being one day ſet in the pillory, he harangued the croud in ſo ſtrong and moving a manner, that fifty of the auditors became his converts, and he won the reſt ſo much in his favour, that his head being freed tumultuouſly from the hole where it was faſtened, the populace went and ſearched for the church of England clergyman, who had been chiefly inſtrumental in bringing him to this puniſhment, and ſet him on the ſame pillory where Fox had ſtood.

Fox was bold enough to convert ſome of Oliver Cromwell's ſoldiers, who thereupon quitted the ſervice, and refuſed to take the oaths. Oliver having as great a contempt for a ſect which would not allow its members to fight, as Sextus Quintus had for another ſect, *Dove non ſi chiavava*, began to perſecute theſe new converts. The priſons were crouded with them; but perſecution ſeldom has any other effect than to increaſe the number of proſelytes. Theſe came therefore from their confinement more ſtrongly confirmed in the principles they had imbibed, and followed by their goalers, whom they had brought over to their belief. But the circumſtances, which contributed chiefly to the ſpreading of this ſect, were as follow. Fox thought himſelf inſpired, and conſequently was of opinion, that he muſt ſpeak

in a manner different from the reſt of mankind. He thereupon began to wreath his body, and to ſcrew up his face, to hold in his breath, and to exhale it in a forcible manner, inſomuch that the prieſteſs of the Pythian god at Delphos could not have acted her part to better advantage. Inſpiration ſoon became ſo habitual to him, that he could ſcarce deliver himſelf in any other manner. This was the firſt gift he communicated to his diſciples. Theſe aped very ſincerely their maſter's ſeveral grimaces, and ſhook in every limb the inſtant the fit of inſpiration came upon them; whence they were called Quakers. The vulgar attempted to mimic them, they trembled; they ſpake through the noſe; they quaked; and fancied themſelves inſpired by the Holy Ghoſt. The only thing now wanting was a few miracles, and accordingly they wrought ſome.

Fox, this modern patriarch, ſpoke thus to a juſtice of peace, before a large aſſembly of people. Friend, take care what thou doſt: God will ſoon puniſh thee for perſecuting his ſaints. This magiſtrate being one who beſotted himſelf every day with bad beer and brandy, died of an apolexy two days after, the moment he had ſigned a mittimus for impriſoning ſome Quakers. The ſudden death with which this juſtice was ſeized, was not aſcribed to his intemperance, but was univerſally looked upon

as the effect of the holy man's predictions; ſo that this accident made more converts to Quakeriſm, than a thouſand ſermons, and as many ſhaking fits could have done. Oliver, finding them to increaſe daily, was deſirous of bringing them over to his party; and for that purpoſe attempted to bribe them with money. However, they were incorruptible, which made him one day declare, that this religion was the only one he had ever met with that had reſiſted the charms of gold.

The Quakers were ſeveral times perſecuted under Charles the ſecond, not upon a religious account, but for refuſing to pay the tythes, for *thee-ing* and *thou-ing* the magiſtrates, and for refuſing to take the oaths enacted by the laws.

At laſt Robert Barclay, a native of Scotland, preſented to the king in 1675, his apology for the Quakers, a work as well drawn up as the ſubject could poſſibly admit. The dedication to Charles the ſecond is not filled with mean flattering encomiums, but abounds with bold touches in favour of truth, and with the wiſeſt counſels. "Thou haſt taſted," ſays he to the king at the cloſe of his epiſtle dedicatory, "of proſperity and adverſity; thou "knoweſt what it is to be baniſhed thy native "country; to be over-ruled as well as to rule, "and ſit upon the throne; and being oppreſſ-"ed, thou haſt reaſon to know how hateful

" the oppreſſor is both to God and man: if,
" after all theſe warnings and adverti ſements,
" thou doſt not turn unto the Lord with all
" thy heart, but forget him who remembered
" thee in thy diſtreſs, and give up thyſelf to
" follow luſt and vanity, ſurely great will be thy
" condemnation.

" Againſt which ſnare, as well as the temp-
" tation of thoſe, that may or do feed thee,
" and prompt thee to evil, the moſt excellent
" and prevalent remedy will be, to apply thy-
" ſelf to that light of Chriſt, which ſhineth in
" thy conſcience, which neither can nor will
" flatter thee, nor ſuffer thee to be at eaſe in
" thy ſins; but doth and will deal plainly and
" faithfully with thee, as thoſe that are fol-
" lowers thereof have plainly done--------Thy
" faithful friend and ſubject, Robert Barclay."

A more ſurprizing circumſtance is, that this epiſtle written by a private man of no figure, was ſo happy in its effects as to put a ſtop to the perſecution.

LETTER IV.

OF THE QUAKERS.

ABOUT this † time aroſe the illuſtrious William Pen, who raiſed the power of the Quakers in America, and would have made them appear venerable in the eyes of the Europeans, were it poſſible for mankind to reſpect virtue, when revealed in a ridiculous light. He was the only ſon of vice-admiral Pen, favourite to the duke of York, afterwards king James the ſecond.

William Pen, at twenty years of age happened to meet with a * Quaker in Cork, whom he had known at Oxford, this man made a proſelyte of him; and William being a ſprightly youth, and naturally eloquent, having a wining aſpect, and a very engaging carriage, he ſoon gained over ſome of his intimates. He carried matters ſo far, that he formed by inſenſible degrees a ſociety of young Quakers, who met at his houſe; ſo that he was at the head of a ſect when he was but a little above twenty.

Being returned, after his leaving Cork, to

† 1666. * Thomas Loe.

the vice-admiral his father, inſtead of falling upon his knees to aſk him his bleſſing, he went up to him with his hat on, and ſaid, Friend, I am glad to ſee thee in good health. The vice-admiral imagined his ſon to be crazy; but ſoon finding he was turned Quaker, he employed all the methods that prudence could ſuggeſt, to engage him to behave and act like other people. The youth made no other anſwer to his father, than by exhorting him to turn Quaker alſo. At laſt his father confined himſelf to this ſingle requeſt, viz that he ſhould wait upon the king and the duke of York with his hat under his arm, and ſhould not *thee* and *thou* them. William anſwered, that he could not do theſe things for conſcience ſake; which exaſperated his father to ſuch a degree, that he turned him out of doors. Young Pen gave God thanks, for permitting him to ſuffer ſo early in his cauſe; after which he went into the city, where he held forth *, and made a great number of converts.

The church of England clergy found their congregations dwindle away daily; and Pen being young, handſom, and of a graceful ſtature, the court, as well as the city ladies, flocked very devoutly to his meeting. The patriarch George Fox hearing of his great reputation, came to London (though the journey was very long) purely to ſee and converſe with

* About 1668, and the 24th year of his age.

him. Both reſolved to go upon miſſions into foreign countries, and accordingly they embarked for Holland, after having left labourers ſufficient to take care of the London vineyard.

Their labours were crowned with ſucceſs in Amſterdam; but a circumſtance, which reflected the greateſt honour on them, and at the ſame time put their humility to the greateſt trial, was the reception they met with from Elizabeth the princeſs Palatine, aunt to George the firſt of Great Britain, a lady conſpicuous for her genius and knowledge, and to whom Des Cartes had dedicated his Philoſophical Romance.

She was then retired to the Hague, where ſhe received theſe friends, for ſo the Quakers were at that time called in Holland. This princeſs had ſeveral conferences with them in her palace, and ſhe at laſt entertained ſo favourable an opinion of Quakeriſm, that they confeſſed ſhe was not far from the kingdom of heaven. The friends ſowed likewiſe the good ſeed in Germany, but reaped very little fruit; for the mode of *thee-ing* and *thou-ing* was not approved of in a country, where a man is perpetually obliged to employ the titles of highneſs and excellency. William Pen returned ſoon to England, upon hearing of his father's ſickneſs, in order to ſee him before he died. The vice-admiral was reconciled to his ſon,

and though of a different perſuaſion, embraced him tenderly. William made a fruitleſs exhortation to his father not to receive the ſacrament, but to die a Quaker; and the good old man intreated his ſon William to wear buttons on his ſleeves, and a crape hatband in his beaver; but all to no purpoſe.

William Pen inherited very large poſſeſſions, part of which conſiſted in crown-debts, due to the vice-admiral for ſums he had advanced for the ſea-ſervice. No monies were at that time more ſecure than thoſe owing from the king. Pen was obliged to go more than once, and *thee* and *thou* king Charles and his miniſters, in order to recover the debt; and at laſt, inſtead of ſpecie, the government inveſted him with the right and ſovereignty of a province of America, to the ſouth of Maryland Thus was a Quaker raiſed to ſovereign power. Pen ſet ſail for his new dominions with two ſhips freighted with Quakers, who followed his fortune. The country was then called Penſilvania, from William Pen, who there founded Philadelphia, now the moſt flouriſhing city in that country. The firſt ſtep he took was to enter into an alliance with his American neighbours; and this is the only treaty between thoſe people and the Chriſtians that was not ratified by an oath, and was never infringed. The new ſovereign was at the ſame time the legiſlator of Penſilvania, and enacted very wiſe

and prudent laws, none of which have ever been changed ſince his time. The firſt is to injure no perſon upon a religious account, and to conſider as brethren all thoſe who believe in one God.

He had no ſooner ſettled his government, but ſeveral American merchants came and peopled this colony. The natives of the country, inſtead of flying into the woods, cultivated, by inſenſible degrees, a friendſhip with the peaceable Quakers. They loved theſe foreigners as much as they deteſted the other Chriſtians who had conquered and laid waſte America. In a little time, a great number of theſe ſavages (falſely ſo called) charmed with the mild and gentle diſpoſition of their neighbours, came in crouds to William Pen and beſought him to admit them into the number of his vaſſals. It was very rare and uncommon for a ſovereign to be *thee'd* and *thou'd* by the meaneſt of his ſubjects, who never took their hats off when they came into his preſence; and as ſingular for a government to be without one prieſt in it, and for a people to be without arms, either offenſive or defenſive; for a body of citizens to be abſolutely undiſtinguiſhed but by the public employments, and for neighbours not to entertain the leaſt jealouſy one againſt the other.

William Pen might glory in having brought down upon earth the ſo much boaſted golden

age, which in all probability never exiſted but in Penſilvania. He returned to England to ſettle ſome affairs relating to his new dominions. After the death of king Charles the ſecond, king James, who had loved the father, indulged the ſame affection to the ſon, and no longer conſidered him as an obſcure ſectary, but as a very great man. The king's politics on this occaſion agreed with his inclinations. He was deſirous of pleaſing the Quakers, by annulling the laws made againſt nonconformiſts, in order to have an opportunity, by this univerſal toleration, of eſtabliſhing the Romiſh religion. All the ſectaries in England ſaw the ſnare that was laid for them, but did not give into it; they never failing to unite, when the Romiſh religion, their common enemy, is to be oppoſed. But Pen did not think himſelf bound in any manner to renounce his principles, merely to favour proteſtants, to whom he was odious, in oppoſition to a king who loved him. He had eſtabliſhed an univerſal toleration with regard to conſcience in America, and would not have it thought that he intended to deſtroy it in Europe; for which reaſon he adhered ſo inviolably to king James, that a report prevailed univerſally of his being a Jeſuit. This calumny affected him very ſtrongly, and he was obliged to juſtify himſelf in print. However, the unfortunate king James the ſecond, in whom, as in moſt princes of the Stuart family,

grandeur and weakneſs were equally blended; and who, like them, as much overdid ſome things as he was ſhort in others, loſt his kingdom in a manner that is hardly to be accounted for.

All the Engliſh ſectariſts accepted from William the third and his parliament, the toleration and indulgence which they had refuſed when offered by king James. It was then the Quakers began to enjoy, by virtue of the laws, the ſeveral privileges they poſſeſs at this time. Pen having at laſt ſeen Quakeriſm firmly eſtabliſhed in his native country, went back to Penſilvania. His own people and the Americans received him with tears of joy, as though he had been a father who was returned to viſit his children. All the laws had been religiouſly obſerved in his abſence, a circumſtance in which no legiſlator had ever been happy but himſelf. After having reſided ſome years in Penſilvania, he left it, but with great reluctance, in order to return to England, there to ſolicit ſome matters in favour of the commerce of Penſilvania. But he never ſaw it again, he dying in Ruſcomb in Berkſhire, anno 1718.

I am not able to gueſs what fate Quakeriſm may have in America, but I perceive it dwindles away daily in England. In all countries where liberty of conſcience is allowed, the eſtabliſhed religion will at laſt ſwallow up all the reſt. Quakers are diſqualified from being mem-

bers of parliament; nor can they enjoy any poſt or preferment, becauſe an oath muſt always be taken on theſe occaſions, and they never ſwear. They are therefore reduced to the neceſſity of ſubſiſting upon traffic. Their children, whom the induſtry of their parents have enriched, are deſirous of enjoying honours, of wearing buttons and ruffles; and quite aſhamed of being called Quakers, they become converts to the church of England, merely to be in the faſhion.

LETTER V.

OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND.

ENGLAND is properly the country of ſectariſts. *Multae ſunt manſiones in mo patris mei* (in my father's houſe are many anſions.) An Engliſhman, as one to whom erty is natural, may go to heaven his own y.

Neverthelefs, though every one is permit- to ſerve God in whatever mode or faſhion thinks proper, yet their true religion, that which a man makes his fortune, is the ſect epiſcopalians or churchmen, called the church England, or ſimply the church, by way of e- nence. No perſon can poſſeſs an employ- nt, either in England or Ireland, unleſs he ranked among the faithful, that is, profeſs nſelf a member of the church of England. his reaſon (which carries mathematical evi- nce with it) has converted ſuch numbers of ſenters of all perſuaſions, that not a twenti- part of the nation is out of the pale of the ablifhed church The Engliſh clergy have ained a great number of the Romiſh cere- nies, and eſpecially that of receiving, with a ſt ſcrupulous attention, their tythes. They

alſo have the pious ambition to aim at ſuperiority.

Moreover, they inſpire very religiouſly their flock with a holy zeal againſt diſſenters of all denominations. This zeal was pretty violent under the tories, in the four laſt years of queen Anne; but was productive of no greater miſchief than the breaking the widows of ſome meeting-houſes, and the demoliſhing ſome few of them. For religious rage ceaſed in England with the civil wars; and was no more under queen Anne, than the hollow noiſe of a ſea whoſe billows ſtill heaved, though ſo long after the ſtorm, when the whigs and tories laid waſte their native country, in the ſame manner as the Guelphs and Gibelins formerly did theirs. It was abſolutely neceſſary for both parties to call in religion on this occaſion; the tories declared for epiſcopacy, and the whigs, as ſome imagined, were for aboliſhing it, however, after theſe had got the upper hand, they contented themſelves with abridging it.

At the time when the earl of Oxford and the lord Bolingbroke uſed to drink healths to the tories, the church of England conſidered thoſe noblemen as the defenders of its holy privileges. The lower houſe of convocation (a kind of houſe of commons) compoſed wholly of the clergy, was in ſome credit at that time: at leaſt the members of it had the liberty to meet, to diſpute on eccleſiaſtical matters

to ſentence impious books from time to time to the flames, that is, books written againſt themſelves. The miniſtry, which is now compoſed of whigs, does not ſo much as allow thoſe gentlemen to aſſemble, ſo that they are at this time reduced (in the obſcurity of their reſpective pariſhes) to the melancholy occupation of praying for the proſperity of the government, whoſe tranquillity they would willingly diſturb. With regard to the biſhops, who are twenty ſix in all, they ſtill have ſeats in the houſe of lords in ſpite of the whigs, becauſe the ancient abuſe of conſidering them as barons ſubſiſts to this day. There is a clauſe however in the oath which the government requires from theſe gentlemen, that puts their chriſtian patience to a very great trial, viz. that they ſhall be of the church of England as by law eſtabliſhed. There are few biſhops, deans, or other dignitaries, but imagine they are ſo *jure divino*; it is conſequently a great mortification to them to be obliged to confeſs, that they owe their dignity to a pitiful law enacted by a ſet of profane laymen. A learned monk (father Courayer) writ a book lately to prove the validity and ſucceſſion of Engliſh ordinations. This book was forbid in France; but do you believe that the Engliſh miniſtry were pleaſed with it? far from it. Thoſe damned whigs do not value a ſtraw, whether the epiſcopal ſucceſſion among them hath been inter-

rupted or not, or whether biſhop Parker wa
conſecrated (as it is pretended) in a tavern, o
a church; for theſe whigs are much bette
pleaſed that the biſhops ſhould derive their au
thority from the parliament, than from the a
poſtles. The lord B------ obſerved, that thi
notion of divine right would only make ſo ma
ny tyrants in lawn-ſleeves, but that the law
made ſo many citizens.

With regard to the morals of the Engliſh
clergy, they are more regular than thoſe o
France, and for this reaſon: all the clergy (a
very few excepted) are educated in the univer
ſities of Oxford or Cambridge, far from the
depravity and corruption which reign in the
capital. They are not called to dignities till
very late, at a time of life, when men are ſen
ſible of no other paſſion but avarice, that is,
when their ambition craves a ſupply. Employ
ments are here beſtowed both in the church
and the army, as a reward for long ſervices;
and we never ſee youngſters made biſhops or
colonels immediately upon their laying aſide
the academical gown; and beſides, moſt of the
clergy are married. The ſtiff and aukward air
contracted by them at the univerſiy, and the
little familiarity the men of this country have
with the ladies, commonly oblige a biſhop to
confine himſelf to, and reſt contented with his
own. Clergymen ſometimes take a glaſs at the
tavern, cuſtom giving them a ſanction on this

occaſion; and if they fuddle themſelves it is in a very ſerious manner, and without giving the leaſt ſcandal.

That fable mixed kind of mortal (not to be defined) who is neither of the clergy nor of the laity; in a word, the thing called Abbe in France, is a ſpecies quite unknown in England. All the clergy here are very much upon the reſerve, and moſt of them pedants. When theſe are told, that in France, young fellows famous for their diſſoluteneſs, and raiſed to the higheſt dignities of the church by female intrigues, addreſs the fair publicly in an amorous way, amuſe themſelves in writing tender love-ſongs, entertain their friends very ſpendidly every night at their own houſes, and after the banquet is ended, withdraw to invoke the aſſiſtance of the Holy Ghoſt, and call themſelves boldly the ſucceſſors of the apoſtles, they bleſs God for their being proteſtants. But, theſe are ſhameleſs heretics, who deſerve to be blown hence through the fames to old Nick, as Rabelais ſays; and for this reaſon I do not trouble myſelf about them.

LETTER VI.

OF THE PRESBYTERIANS.

THE church of England is confined almoſt to the kingdom whence it received its name, and to Ireland; for Presbyterianiſm is the eſtabliſhed religion in Scotland. This Presbyterianiſm is directly the ſame with Calviniſm, as it was eſtabliſhed in France, and is now profeſſed at Geneva. As the prieſts of this ſect receive but very inconſiderable ſtipends from their churches, and conſequently cannot emulate the ſplendid luxury of biſhops, they exclaim very naturally againſt honours which they can never attain to. Figure to yourſelf the haughty Diogenes, trampling under foot the pride of Plato. The Scotch Presbyterians are not very unlike that proud, tho' tattered, reaſoner. Diogenes did not uſe Alexander half ſo impertinently as theſe treated king Charles the ſecond; for when they took up arms in his cauſe, in oppoſition to Oliver, who had deceived them, they forced that poor monarch to undergo the hearing of three or four ſermons every day; would not ſuffer him to play, reduced him to a ſtate of penitence and

mortification; ſo that Charles ſoon grew ſick of theſe pedants, and accordingly eloped from them with as much joy as a youth does from ſchool.

A church of England miniſter appears as another Cato, in preſence of a juvenile, ſprightly French graduate, who bawls for a whole morning together in the divinity ſchools, and hums a ſong in chorus with ladies in the evening; but this Cato is a very ſpark, when before a Scotch presbyterian. The latter affects a ſerious gate, puts on a ſour look, wears a vaſtly broad-brimmed hat, and a long cloak over a very ſhort coat; preaches through the noſe, and gives the name of the whore of Babylon to all churches, where the miniſters are ſo fortunate as to enjoy an annual revenue of five or ſix thouſand pounds; and where the people are weak enough to ſuffer this, and to give them the titles of my lord, your lordſhip, or your eminence.

Theſe gentlemen who have alſo ſome churches in England, introduced there the mode of grave and ſevere exhortations. To them is owing the ſanctification of Sunday in the three kingdoms. People are forbid to work or take any recreation on that day, in which the ſeverity is twice as great as that of the Romiſh church. No operas, plays or concerts are allowed in London on Sundays; and even cards are ſo expreſly forbid, that none but perſons

of quality, and thoſe we call the genteel, play on that day; the reſt of the nation go either to the church, to the tavern, or to ſee their miſtreſſes.

Though the Epiſcopal and the Presbyterian ſects are the two prevailing ones in Great Britain, yet all others are very welcome to come and ſettle in it, and live very ſociably together, though moſt of their preachers hate one another almoſt as cordially as a Janſeniſt damns a Jeſuit.

Take a view of the royal-exchange in London, a place more venerable than many courts of juſtice, where the repreſentatives of all nations meet for the benefit of mankind. There the Jew, the Mahometan, and the Chriſtian tranſact together, as though they all profeſſed the ſame religion, and give the name of infidel to none but bankrupts. There the Presbyterian confides in the Anabaptiſt, and the churchman depends on the Quaker's word. At the breaking up of this pacific and free aſſembly, ſome withdraw to the ſynagogue, and others to take a glaſs. This man goes and is baptized in a great tub, in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghoſt: that man has his ſon's foreſkin cut off, whilſt a ſet of Hebrew words (quite unintelligible to him) are mumbled over his child. Others retire to their churches, and there wait for the inſpi

ration of heaven with their hats on, and all are satisfied.

If one religion only were allowed in England, the government would very possibly become arbitrary; if there were but two, the people would cut one anothers throats; but as there are such a multitude, they all live happy, and in peace.

LETTER VII.

OF THE SOCINIANS, OR ARIANS, OR ANTITRINITARIANS.

THERE is a little ſect here compoſed of clergymen, and of a few very learned perſons among the laity, who, though they do not call themſelves Arians or Socinians, do yet diſſent entirely from St. Athanaſius, with regard to their notions of the Trinity, and declare very frankly that the Father is greater than the Son.

Do you remember what is related of a certain orthodox biſhop, who in order to convince an emperor of the reality of conſubſtantiation, put his hand under the chin of the monarch's ſon, and took him by the noſe in the preſence of his ſacred majeſty? The emperor was going to order his attendants to throw the biſhop out of the window, when the good old man gave him this handſome and convincing reaſon: Since your majeſty, ſays he, is angry when your ſon has not due reſpect ſhown to him, what puniſhment do you think will God the Father inflict on thoſe who refuſe his Son Jeſus the titles due to him? The perſons I

juſt now mentioned, declare that the holy biſhop took a very wrong ſtep; that his argument was inconcluſive, and that the emperor ſhould have anſwered him thus; Know that there are two ways by which men may be wanting in reſpect to me; firſt in not doing honour ſufficient to my ſon; and ſecondly, in paying him the ſame honour as to me.

Be this as it will, the principles of Arius begin to revive, not only in England, but in Holland and Poland. The celebrated Sir Iſaac Newton honoured this opinion ſo far as to countenance it. This philoſopher thought that the Unitarians argued more mathematically than we do. But the moſt ſanguine ſtickler for Arianiſm is the illuſtrious Dr. Clark. This man is rigidly virtuous, and of a mild diſpoſition; is more fond of his tenets, than deſirous of propagating them; and abſorbed ſo entirely in his problems and calculations, that he is a mere reaſoning machine.

It is he who wrote a book which is much eſteemed and little underſtood, on the exiſtence of God; and another more intelligible, but pretty much contemned, on the truth of the chriſtian religion.

He never engaged in ſcholaſtic diſputes, which our friend calls venerable trifles. He only publiſhed a work containing all the teſtimonies of the primitive ages, for and againſt the Unitarians, and leaves to the reader the

counting of the voices, and the liberty of forming a judgment. This book won the doctor a great number of partizans, and loſt him the ſee of Canterbury: but in my humble opinion, he was out in his calculation, and had better have been primate of all England, than merely an Arian parſon.

You ſee that opinions are ſubject to revolutions as well as empires. Arianiſm, after having triumphed during three centuries, and been forgot twelve, riſes at laſt out of its own aſhes; but it has choſe a very improper ſeaſon to make its appearance in, the preſent age being quite cloyed with diſputes and ſects. The members of this ſect are beſides too few to be indulged the liberty of holding public aſſemblies, which however they will doubtleſs be permitted to do, in caſe they ſpread conſiderably. But people are now ſo very cold with reſpect to all things of this kind, that there is little probability any new religion, or old one that may be revived, will meet with favour. Is it not whimſical enough that Luther, Calvin, and Zuinglius, whoſe writings no body in this age reads, ſhould have founded ſects which are now ſpread over a great part of Europe; that Mahomet, though ſo ignorant, ſhould have given a religion to Aſia and Africa; and that Sir Iſaac Newton, Dr. Clark, Mr. Locke, Mr. Le Clerc, etc. the greateſt philoſophers, as well as the ableſt writers of their ages,

ſhould ſcarce have been able to raiſe a little ſtock, which even decreaſes daily?

This it is to be born at a proper period of time. Were cardinal de Retz to return again into the world, neither his eloquence, nor his intrigues would draw together ten women in Paris.

Were Oliver Cromwell, he who beheaded his ſovereign, and ſeized upon the kingly dignity, to riſe from the dead, he would be a wealthy city trader, and no more.

LETTER VIII.

OF THE PARLIAMENT.

THE members of the Engliſh parliament are fond of comparing themſelves to the old Romans.

Not long ſince, Mr. Shippen opened a ſpeech in the houſe of commons with theſe words, "The majeſty of the people of England would "be wounded." The ſingularity of the expreſſion occaſioned a loud laugh; but this gentleman, ſo far from being diſconcerted, repeated the ſame words with a reſolute tone of voice, and the laugh ceaſed. In my opinion, the majeſty of the people of England has nothing in common with that of the people of Rome; much leſs is there any affinity between their governments. There is in London a ſenate, ſome of the members whereof are accuſed, doubtleſs very unjuſtly, of ſelling their voices on certain occaſions, as was done in Rome; this is the only reſemblance. Beſides, the two nations appear to me quite oppoſite in character, with regard both to good and evil. The Romans never knew the dreadful folly of religious wars, an abomination reſerved for

devout preachers of patience and humility. Marius and Sylla, Caeſar and Pompey, Antony and Auguſtus, did not draw their ſwords and ſet the world in a blaze, merely to determine whether the Flamen ſhould wear his ſhirt over his robe, or his robe over his ſhirt; or whether the ſacred chickens ſhould eat and drink, or eat only, in order to take the augury. The Engliſh have hanged one another by law, and cut one another to pieces in pitched battles, for quarrels of as trifling a nature. The ſects of the Epiſcopalians and Presbyterians quite diſtracted theſe very ſerious heads for a time. But I fancy they will hardly ever be ſo ſilly again, they ſeeming to be grown wiſer at their own expence; and I do not perceive the leaſt inclination in them to murder one another merely about ſyllogiſms, as ſome zealots among them once did.

But here follows a more eſſential difference between Rome and England, which gives the advantage entirely to the latter, viz. that the civil wars of Rome ended in ſlavery, and thoſe of the Engliſh in liberty. The Engliſh are the only people upon earth who have been able to preſcribe limits to the power of kings by reſiſting them; and who, by a ſerious of ſtruggles, have at laſt eſtabliſhed that wiſe government, where the prince is all-powerful to do good, and at the ſame time is reſtrained from committing evil; where the nobles are great

without inſolence, though there are no vaſſals; and where the people ſhare in the government without confuſion.

The houſe of lords and that of the commons; divide the legiſlative power under the king; but the Romans had no ſuch balance. The patricians and plebeians in Rome were perpetually at variance, and there was no intermediate power to reconcile them. The Roman ſenate, who were ſo unjuſtly, ſo criminally proud, as not to ſuffer the plebeians to ſhare with them in any thing, could find no other artifice to keep the latter out of the adminiſtration, than by employing them in foreign wars. They conſidered the plebeians as wild beaſts, whom it behoved them to let looſe upon their neighbours, for fear they ſhould devour their maſters. Thus the greateſt defect in the government of the Romans raiſed them to be conquerors. By being unhappy at home, they triumphed over and poſſeſſed themſelves of the world, till at laſt their diviſions ſunk them to ſlavery.

The government of England will never riſe to ſo exalted a pitch of glory, nor will its end be ſo fatal. The Engliſh are not fired with the ſplendid folly of making conqueſts, but would only prevent their neighbours from conquering. They are not only jealous of their own liberty, but even of that of other nations. The Engliſh were exaſperated againſt Lewis

the fourteenth, for no other reaſon but becauſe he was ambitious; and declared war againſt him merely out of levity, not from any intereſted motives.

The Engliſh have doubtleſs purchaſed their liberties at a very high price, and waded thro' ſeas of blood to drown the idol of arbitrary power. Other nations have been involved in as great calamities, and have ſhed as much blood; but then the blood they ſpilt in defence of their liberties, only enſlaved them the more.

That which riſes to a revolution in England, is no more than a ſedition in other countries. A city in Spain, in Barbary, or in Turkey, takes up arms in defence of its privileges, when immediately it is ſtormed by mercenary troops, it is puniſhed by executioners, and the reſt of the nation kiſs the chains they are loaded with. The French are of opinion, that the government of this iſland is more tempeſtuous than the ſea which ſurrounds it; which indeed is true; but then it is never ſo but when the king raiſes the ſtorm; when he attempts to ſeize the ſhip of which he is only the chief pilot. The civil wars of France laſted longer; were more cruel, and productive of greater evils than thoſe of England: but none of theſe civil wars had a wiſe and prudent liberty for their object.

In the deteſtable reigns of Charles the ninth

and Henry the third, the whole affair was only whether the people ſhould be ſlaves to the Guiſes. With regard to the laſt war of Paris, it deſerves only to be hooted at. Methinks I ſee a croud of ſchool-boys riſing up in arms againſt their maſter, and afterwards whipped for it. Cardinal de Retz, who was witty and brave, but to no purpoſe; rebellious without a cauſe; factious without deſign, and head of a defenceleſs party, caballed for caballing ſake, and ſeemed to foment the civil war merely out of diverſion. The parliament did not know what he intended, nor what he did not intend. He levied troops by act of parliament, and the next moment caſhiered them. He threatened, he begged pardon; he ſet a price upon cardinal Mazarine's head, and afterwards congratulated him in a public manner. Our civil wars under Charles the ſixth were bloody and cruel, thoſe of the league execrable, and that of the *Frondeurs ridiculous.

That for which the French chiefly reproach the Engliſh nation, is, the murder of king Charles the firſt, whom his ſubjects treated exactly as he would have treated them, had his reign been proſperous. After all, conſider

*Frondeurs, in its proper ſenſe Slingers, and figuratively Cavillers, or lovers of contradiction; was a name given to a league or party that oppoſed the French miniſtry, *i. e.* cardinal Mazarine in 1648. See Rochefocault's memoirs.

on one ſide, Charles the firſt defeated in a pitched battle, impriſoned, tried, ſentenced to die in Weſtminſter-hall, and then beheaded: and on the other, the emperor Henry the ſeventh, poiſoned by his chaplain at his receiving the ſacrament; Henry the third ſtabbed by a monk; thirty aſſaſſinations projected againſt Henry the fourth; ſeveral of them put in execution, and the laſt bereaving that great monarch of his life. Weigh, I ſay, all theſe wicked attempts, and then judge.

LETTER IX.

OF THE GOVERNMENT.

THAT mixture in the Engliſh government, that harmony between king, lords, and commons, did not always ſubſiſt. England was enſlaved for a long ſeries of years by the Romans, the Saxons, the Danes, and the French ſucceſſively. William the conqueror particularly ruled them with a rod of iron. He diſpoſed as abſolutely of the lives and fortunes of his conquered ſubjects as an eaſtern monarch; and forbid, upon pain of death, the Engliſh both fire or candle in their houſes after eight o'clock: whether he did this to prevent their nocturnal meetings, or only to try, by this odd and whimſical prohibition, how far it was poſſible for one man to extend his power over his fellow-creatures. It is true indeed that the Engliſh had parliaments before and after William the conqueror; and they boaſt of them, as though theſe aſſemblies then called parliaments, compoſed of eccleſiaſtical tyrants, and of plunderers entitled barons, had been the guardians of the public liberty and happineſs.

The Barbarians who came from the ſhores of the Baltic, and ſettled in the reſt of Europe, brought with them the form of government called ſtates or parliaments, about which ſo much noiſe is made, and which are ſo little underſtood. Kings indeed were not abſolute in thoſe days, but then the people were more wretched upon that very account, and more compleatly enſlaved. The chiefs of theſe ſavages, who had laid waſte France, Italy, Spain and England, made themſelves monarchs. Their generals divided among themſelves the ſeveral countries they had conquered, whence ſprung thoſe margraves, thoſe peers, thoſe barons, thoſe petty tyrants, who often conteſted with their ſovereigns for the ſpoils of whole nations. Theſe were birds of prey, fighting with an eagle for doves, whoſe blood the victorious was to ſuck. Every nation, inſtead of being governed by one maſter, was trampled upon by an hundred tyrants. The prieſts ſoon played a part among them. Before this, it had been the fate of the Gauls, the Germans, and the Britons, to be always governed by their druids, and the chiefs of their villages, an ancient kind of barons, not ſo tyrannical as their ſucceſſors. Theſe druids pretended to be mediators between God and man. They enacted laws, they fulminated their excommunications, and ſentenced to death. The biſhops ſucceeded, by inſenſible degrees, to

their temporal authority in the Goth and Vandal government. The popes ſet themſelves at their head, and armed with their briefs, their bulls, and reinforced by monks, they made even kings tremble; depoſed and aſſaſſinated them at pleaſure, and employed every artifice to draw into their own purſes monies from all parts of Europe. The weak Ina, one of the tyrants of the Saxon heptarchy in England, was the firſt monarch that ſubmitted, in his pilgrimage to Rome, to pay St. Peter's penny (equivalent very near to a French crown) for every houſe in his dominions. The whole iſland ſoon followed his example; England became inſenſibly one of the pope's provinces, and the holy father uſed to ſend from time to time his legates thither to levy exorbitant taxes. At laſt king John delivered up, by a public inſtrument, the kingdom of England to the pope, who had excommunicated him; but the barons, not finding their account in this reſignation, dethroned the wretched king John, and ſeated Lewis, father to St. Lewis king of France in his place. However they were ſoon weary of their new monarch, and accordingly obliged him to return back to France.

Whilſt that the barons, the biſhops and the popes, all laid waſte England, where all were for ruling; the moſt numerous, the moſt uſeful, even the moſt virtuous, and conſequently the moſt venerable part of mankind, conſiſting

of thoſe who ſtudy the laws and the ſciences; of traders, of artificers; in a word, of all who were not tyrants; that is, thoſe who are called the people; theſe, I ſay, were by them looked upon as ſo many animals beneath the dignity of the human ſpecies. The commons in thoſe ages were far from ſharing in the government, they being villains or peaſants, whoſe labour, whoſe blood were the property of their maſters, who intitled themſelves the nobility. The major part of men in Europe were at that time what they are to this day in ſeveral parts of the world; they were villains or bondſmen of lords, that is, a kind of cattle bought and ſold with the land. Many ages paſt away before juſtice could be done to human nature; before mankind were conſcious that it was abominable numbers ſhould ſow, and but few reap: and was not France very happy, when the power and authority of thoſe petty robbers was aboliſhed by the lawful authority of kings and of the people?

Happily in the violent ſhocks which the diviſions between kings and nobles gave to empires, the chains of nations were more or leſs heavy. Liberty, in England, ſprung from the quarrels of tyrants. The barons forced king John and king Henry the third, to grant the famous Magna Charta, the chief deſign of which was indeed to make kings dependent on the lords; but then the reſt of the nation were

a little favoured in it, in order that they might join, on proper occaſions, with their pretended maſters. This great charter, which is conſidered as the ſacred origin of the Engliſh liberties, ſhews in itſelf how little liberty was known.

The title alone proves, that the king thought he had a juſt right to be abſolute; and that the barons, and even the clergy forced him to give up the pretended right, for no other reaſon but becauſe they were the moſt powerful.

Magna Charta begins in the following ſtile, *We grant, of our own free will, the following privileges to the archbiſhops, biſhops, priors and barons of our kingdom*, etc.

The houſe of commons is not once mentioned in the articles of this charter, a proof that it did not yet exiſt, or that it exiſted without power. Mention is therein made, by name, of the freemen of England, a melancholy proof that ſome were not ſo. It appears by the thirty ſecond article, that theſe pretended freemen owed ſervice to their lords. Such a liberty as this was not many removes from ſlavery.

By article XXI, the king ordains that his officers ſhall not henceforward ſeize upon, unleſs they pay for them, the horſes and carts of freemen. The people conſidered this ordinance as a real liberty, though it was a greater tyranny. Henry the ſeventh, that happy uſurper and great politician, who pretended

to love the barons, though he in reality hated and feared them, got their lands alienated. By this means the *villains*, afterwards acquiring riches by their industry, purchased the estates and country seats of the illustrious peers, who had ruined themselves by their folly and extravagance, and all the lands got by insensible degrees into other hands.

The power of the house of commons increased every day. The families of the ancient peers were at last extinct; and as peers only are properly noble in England, there would be no such thing in strictness of law, as nobility in the island, had not the kings created new barons from time to time, and preserved the body of peers, once a terror to them to oppose them to the commons since become so formidable.

All these new peers, who compose the higher house, receive nothing but their titles from the king, and very few of them have estates in those places whence they take their titles. One shall be duke of D------, though he has not a foot of land in Dorsetshire; and another is earl of a village, though he scarce knows where it is situated. The peers have power, but it is only in the parliament house.

There is no such thing here, as * *haute moy-*

* *La haute justice*, is that of a lord, who has power to sentence capitally, and to judge of all causes civil and criminal, those of the crown excepted. *La moy-*

enne, et baſſe juſtice, that is, a power to judge in all matters civil and criminal; nor a right or privilege of hunting in the grounds of a citizen, who at the ſame time is not permitted to fire a gun in his own field.

No one is exempted in this country from paying certain taxes, becauſe he is a nobleman or a prieſt. All duties and taxes are ſettled by the houſe of commons, whoſe power is greater than that of the peers, though inferior to it in dignity. The ſpiritual as well as temporal lords have the liberty to reject a money bill brought in by the commons; but they are not allowed to alter any thing in it, and muſt either paſs or throw it out without reſtriction. When the bill has paſſed the lords, and is ſigned by the king, then the whole nation pays, every one in proportion to his revenue or eſtate, not according to his title, which would be abſurd. There is no ſuch thing as an arbitrary ſubſidy or poll-tax, but a real tax on the lands, of all which an eſtimate was made in the reign of the famous king William the third.

The land-tax continues ſtill upon the ſame foot, though the revenue of the lands is increaſed. Thus no one is tyrannized over, and

enne juſtice, is empowered to judge of actions relating to guardianſhips and offences. *La baſſe juſtice* takes cognizance of the fees due to the lord, of the havoc of beaſts, and of offences. The *moyenne juſtice* is imaginary, and there is perhaps no inſtance of its being ever put in execution.

every one is eaſy. The feet of the peaſants are not bruiſed with wooden ſhoes; they eat white bread, are well cloathed, and are not afraid of increaſing their ſtock of cattle, nor of tiling their houſes, from any apprehenſions that their taxes will be raiſed the year following. The annual income of the eſtates of a great many commoners in England, amounts to two hundred thouſand livres; and yet theſe do not think it beneath them to plough the lands which enrich them, and on which they enjoy their liberty.

LETTER X.

OF TRADE.

AS trade enriched the citizens of England, ſo it contributed to their freedom, and this freedom on the other ſide extended their commerce, whence aroſe the grandeur of the ſtate. Trade raiſed by inſenſible degrees the naval power, which gives the Engliſh a ſuperiority over the ſeas, and they now are maſters of very near two hundred ſhips of war. Poſterity will very poſſibly be ſurprized to hear that an iſland, whoſe only produce is a little lead, tin, fuller's earth, and coarſe wool, ſhould become ſo powerful by its commerce, as to be able to ſend in 1723, three fleets at the ſame time to three different and far diſtanced parts of the globe. One before Gibraltar, conquered, and ſtill poſſeſſed by the Engliſh; a ſecond to Porto-Bello, to diſpoſſeſs the king of Spain of the treaſures of the Weſt-Indies; and a third into the Baltic, to prevent the northern powers from coming to an engagement.

At the time when Lewis the fourteenth made all Italy tremble, and that his armies, which had already poſſeſſed themſelves of Savoy and Piedmont, were upon the point of taking Tu-

rin; prince Eugene was obliged to march from the middle of Germany in order to ſuccour Savoy. Having no money, without which cities cannot be either taken or defended, he addreſſed himſelf to ſome Engliſh merchants. Theſe, at an hour and half's warning, lent him five millions, whereby he was enabled to deliver Turin, and to beat the French; after which he wrote the following ſhort letter to the perſons who had diſburſed him the abovementioned ſums: "Gentlemen, I have receiv-"ed your money, and flatter myſelf that I have "laid it out to your ſatisfaction." Such a circumſtance as this raiſes a juſt pride in an Engliſh merchant, and makes him preſume (not without ſome reaſon) to compare himſelf to a Roman citizen; and indeed a peer's brother does not think traffic beneath him. When the lord Townſhend was miniſter of ſtate, a brother of his was content to be a city merchant; and at the time that the earl of Oxford governed Great Britain, his youngeſt brother was no more than a factor in Aleppo, where he choſe to live, and where he died. This cuſtom, which begins however to be laid aſide, appears monſtrous to Germans, vainly puffed up with their extraction. Theſe think it morally impoſſible that the ſon of an Engliſh peer ſhould be no more than a rich and powerful citizen; for all are princes in Germany. There have been thirty highneſſes of the ſame name, all

whoſe patrimony conſiſted only in their eſcutcheons and their pride.

In France the title of marquis is given gratis to any one who will accept of it; and whoſoever arrives at Paris from the midſt of the moſt remote provinces with money in his purſe, and a name terminating in *ac* or *ille*, may ſtrut about, and cry, ſuch a man as I! A man of my rank and figure! and may look down upon a trader with ſovereign contempt; whilſt the trader on the other ſide, by thus often hearing his profeſſion treated ſo diſdainfully, is fool enough to bluſh at it. However, I need not ſay which is moſt uſeful to a nation; a lord, powdered in the tip of the mode, who knows exactly at what o'clock the king riſes and goes to bed; and who gives himſelf airs of grandeur and ſtate, at the ſame time that he is acting the ſlave in the anti-chamber of a prime miniſter; or a merchant, who enriches his country, and diſpatches orders from his compting-houſe to Surat and Grand Cairo, and contributes to the felicity of the world.

LETTER XI.

OF INOCULATION.

IT is inadvertently affirmed in the chriſtian countries of Europe, that the Engliſh are fools and madmen. Fools, becauſe they give their children the ſmall-pox to prevent their catching it; and madmen, becauſe they wantonly communicate a certain and dreadful diſtemper to their children, merely to prevent an uncertain evil. The Engliſh, on the other ſide, call the reſt of the Europeans cowardly and unnatural. Cowardly, becauſe they are afraid of putting their children to a little pain; unnatural, becauſe they expoſe them to die one time or other of the ſmall-pox. But that the reader may be able to judge, whether the Engliſh, or thoſe who differ from them in opinion, are in the right, here follows the hiſtory of the famed inoculation, which is mentioned with ſo much dread in France.

The Circaſſian women have, from time immemorial, communicated the ſmall-pox to their children, when not above ſix months old, by making an inciſion in the arm; and by putting into this inciſion a puſtle, taken carefully from

the body of another child. This puſtle produces the ſame effect in the arm it is laid in, as yeſt in a piece of dough: it ferments, and diffuſes through the whole maſs of blood, the qualities with which it is impregnated. The puſtles of the child, in whom the artificial ſmall-pox has been thus inoculated, are employed to communicate the ſame diſtemper to others. There is an almoſt perpetual circulation of it in Circaſſia; and when unhappily the ſmall-pox has quite left the country, the inhabitants of it are in as great trouble and perplexity, as other nations when their harveſt has fallen ſhort.

The circumſtance that introduced a cuſtom in Circaſſia, which appears ſo ſingular to others, is nevertheleſs a cauſe common to all nations, I mean maternal tenderneſs and intereſt.

The Circaſſians are poor, and their daughters are beautiful; and indeed it is in them they chiefly trade. They furniſh with beauties the ſeraglios of the Turkiſh ſultan, of the Perſian ſophy, and of all thoſe who are wealthy enough to purchaſe and maintain ſuch precious merchandize. Theſe maidens are very honourably and virtuouſly inſtructed to fondle and careſs men; are taught dances of a very polite and effeminate kind; and how to heighten, by the moſt voluptuous artifices, the pleaſures of their diſdainful maſters for whom they are de-

ſigned. Theſe unhappy creatures repeat their leſſon to their mothers, in the ſame manner as little girls among us repeat their catechiſm, without underſtanding one word they ſay.

Now it often happened, that after a father and mother had taken the utmoſt care of the education of their children, they were fruſtrated of all their hopes in an inſtant. The ſmall-pox getting into the family, one daughter died of it, another loſt an eye, a third had a great noſe at her recovery, and the unhappy parents were compleatly ruined. Even frequently, when the ſmall-pox became epidemical, trade was ſuſpended for ſeveral years, which thinned very conſiderably the ſeraglios of Perſia and Turkey.

A trading nation is always watchful over its own intereſts, and graſps at every diſcovery that may be of advantage to its commerce. The Circaſſians obſerved, that ſcarce one perſon in a thouſand was ever attacked by a ſmall-pox of a violent kind. That ſome indeed had this diſtemper very favourably three or four times, but never twice ſo as to prove fatal; in a word, that no one ever had it in a violent degree twice in his life. They obſerved farther, that when the ſmall pox is of the milder ſort, and the puſtles have only a tender, delicate ſkin to break thro', they never leave the leaſt ſcar in the face. From theſe natural obſervations they concluded, that in caſe an infant of ſix months

or a year old ſhould have a milder ſort of ſmall-pox, he would not die of it, would not be marked, nor be ever afflicted with it again.

In order therefore to preſerve the life and beauty of their children, the only thing remaining was, to give them the ſmall-pox in their infant years. This they did, by inoculating, in the body of a child, a puſtle taken from the moſt regular, and at the ſame time the moſt favourable ſort of ſmall-pox that could be procured.

The experiment could not poſſibly fail. The Turks, who are people of good ſenſe, ſoon adopted this cuſtom, inſomuch that at this time there is not a baſſa in Conſtantinople, but communicates the ſmall-pox to his children of both ſexes, immediately upon their being weaned.

Some pretend, that the Circaſſians borrowed this cuſtom anciently from the Arabians; but we ſhall leave the clearing up this point of hiſtory to ſome learned Benedictine, who will not fail to compile a great many folios on this ſubject, with the ſeveral proofs or authorities. All I have to ſay upon it, is, that in the beginning of the reign of king George the firſt, the lady Wortley Montague, a woman of as fine a genius, and endued with as great a ſtrength of mind as any of her ſex in the Britiſh kingdoms, being with her husband, who was ambaſſador at the Porte, made no ſcruple to communicate the ſmall-pox to an infant of which ſhe was

delivered in Conſtantinople. The chaplain repreſented to his lady, but to no purpoſe, that this was an unchriſtian operation, and therefore that it could ſucceed with none but infidels. However, it had the moſt happy effect upon the ſon of the lady Wortley Montague, who, at her return to England, communicated the experiment to the princeſs of Wales, now queen of England. It muſt be confeſſed that this princeſs, abſtracted from her crown and titles, was born to encourage the whole circle of arts, and to do good to mankind. She appears as an amiable philoſopher on the throne; having never let ſlip one opportunity of improving the great talents ſhe received from nature, nor of exerting her beneficence. It is ſhe, who being informed that a daughter of Milton was living, but in miſerable circumſtances, immediately ſent her a conſiderable preſent. It is ſhe who protects the learned father Courayer. It is ſhe who condeſcended to attempt a reconciliation between Dr. Clark and Mr. Leibnitz. The moment ſhe heard of inoculation, ſhe cauſed an experiment of it to be made on four criminals ſentenced to die, and by that means ſaved their lives doubly; for ſhe not only ſaved them from the gallows, but, by means of this artificial ſmall-pox, prevented their ever having that diſtemper in a natural way, with which they would very probably been attacked one time or other,

and might have died of in a more advanced age.

The princeſs, being aſſured of the uſefulneſs of this operation, cauſed her own children to be inoculated. A great part of the kingdom followed her example, and ſince that time ten thouſand children, at leaſt, of perſons of condition, owe in this manner their lives to her majeſty, and to the lady Wortley Montague; and as many of the fair ſex are obliged to them for their beauty.

Upon a general calculation, threeſcore perſons in every hundred have the ſmall-pox. Of theſe threeſcore, twenty die of it in the moſt favourable ſeaſon of life, and as many more wear the diſagreeable remains of it as long as they live. Thus, a fifth part of mankind either die, or are disfigured by this diſtemper. But it does not prove fatal to ſo much as one, among thoſe who are inoculated in Turkey or in England, unleſs the patient be infirm, or would have died had not the experiment been made upon him. Beſides no one is disfigured, no one has the ſmall-pox a ſecond time, if the inoculation was perfect. It is therefore certain, that had the lady of ſome French ambaſſador brought the ſecret from Conſtantinople to Paris the nation would have been for ever obliged to her. Then the duke de Villequier father to the duke d'Aumont, who enjoys the moſt vigorous conſtitution, and is the healthieſt

man in France, would not have been cut off in the flower of his age.

The prince of Soubiſe, happy in the fineſt fluſh of health, would not have been ſnatched away at five and twenty; nor the dauphin, grand-father to Lewis fifteenth have been laid in his grave in his fiftieth year. Twenty thouſand perſons, whom the ſmall-pox ſwept away at Paris in 1723 would have been alive at this time. But are not the French fond of life, and is beauty ſo inconſiderable an advantage as to be diſregarded by the ladies! It muſt be confeſſed that we are an odd kind of people. Perhaps our nation will imitate, ten years hence, this practice of the Engliſh, if the clergy and the phyſicians will but give them leave to do it: or poſſibly our countrymen may introduce inoculation three months hence in France out of mere whim, in caſe the Engliſh ſhould diſcontinue it through fickleneſs.

I am informed that the Chineſe have practiſed inoculation theſe hundred years, a circumſtance that argues very much in its favour, ſince they are thought to be the wiſeſt and beſt governed people in the world. The Chineſe indeed do not communicate this diſtemper by inoculation, but at the noſe, in the ſame manner as we take ſnuff. This is a more agreeable way, but then it produces the like effects, and proves, at the ſame time, that had inoculation been practiſed in France, it would have ſaved the lives of thouſands.

LETTER XII.

OF THE LORD BACON.

NOT long ſince, the trite and frivolous queſtion following was debated in a very polite and learned company, viz. who was the greateſt man, Caeſar, Alexander, Tamerlane, Cromwell, etc.

Some body anſwered, that Sir Iſaac Newton excelled them all. The gentleman's aſſertion was very juſt; for if true greatneſs conſiſts in having received from heaven a mighty genius, and having employed it to enlighten our own minds and that of others; a man like Sir Iſaac Newton, whoſe equal is hardly found in a thouſand years, is the truly great man. And thoſe politicians and conquerors (and all ages produce ſome) were generally ſo many illuſtrious wicked men. That man claims our reſpect, who commands over the minds of the reſt of the world by the force of truth, not thoſe who enſlave their fellow-creatures; he who is acquainted with the univerſe, not they who deface it.

Since therefore you deſire me to give you an account of the famous perſonages which

England has given birth to, I ſhall begin with lord Bacon, Mr. Locke, Sir Iſaac Newton, etc. afterwards the warriors and miniſters of ſtate ſhall come in their order.

I muſt begin with the celebrated viſcount Verulam, known in Europe by the name of Bacon, which was that of his family. His father had been lord-keeper, and himſelf was a great many years lord chancellor under king James the firſt. Nevertheleſs, amidſt the intrigues of a court, and the affairs of his exalted employment, which alone were enough to engroſs his whole time, he yet found ſo much leiſure for ſtudy, as to make himſelf a great philoſopher, a good hiſtorian, and an elegant writer; and a ſtill more ſurprizing circumſtance is, that he lived in an age in which the art of writing juſtly and elegantly was little known, much leſs true philoſophy. Lord Bacon, as is the fate of man, was more eſteemed after his death than in his life-time. His enemies were in the Britiſh court, and his admirers were foreigners.

When the marquis d'Effiat attended in England upon the princeſs Henrietta Maria, daughter to Henry the fourth, whom king Charles the firſt had married, that miniſter went and viſited the lord Bacon, who being at that time ſick in his bed, received him with the curtains ſhut cloſe. You reſemble the angels, ſays the marquis to him; we hear thoſe

beings ſpoken of perpetually, and we believe them ſuperior to men, but are never allowed the conſolation of ſeeing them.

You know that this great man was accuſed of a crime very unbecoming a philoſopher, I mean bribery and extortion. You know that he was ſentenced by the houſe of lords, to pay a fine of about four hundred thouſand French livres; to loſe his peerage and his dignity of chancellor. But in the preſent age, the Engliſh revere his memory to ſuch a degree that they will ſcarce allow him to have been guilty. In caſe you ſhould aſk what are my thoughts on this head, I ſhall anſwer you in the words which I heard the lord Bolingbroke uſe on another occaſion. Several gentlemen were ſpeaking, in his company, of the avarice with which the late duke of Marlborough had been charged, ſome examples whereof being given, the lord Bolingbroke was appealed to (who having been in the oppoſite party, might perhaps, without the imputation of indecency, have been allowed to clear up that matter:) "he was ſo great "a man, replied his lordſhip that I have forgot "his vices."

I ſhall therefore confine myſelf to thoſe things which ſo juſtly gained lord Bacon the eſteem of all Europe.

The moſt ſingular, and the beſt of all his pieces, is that which, at this time, is the moſt uſeleſs and the leaſt read, I mean his *Novum*

ientiarum Organum. This is the ſcaffold ith which the new philoſophy was raiſed; nd when the edifice was built, part of it at aſt, the ſcaffold was no longer of ſervice.

The lord Bacon was not yet aquainted with ature, but then he knew, and pointed out, the eneral paths that lead to it. He had deſpiſed his younger years the thing called philoſo-hy in the univerſities; and did all that lay in is power to prevent thoſe ſocieties of men, ſtituted to improve human reaſon, from de-raving it by their quiddities, their horrors of he vacuum, their ſubſtantial forms, and all hoſe impertinent terms, which not only igno-nce had rendered venerable, but which had een made ſacred by their being ridiculouſly lended with religion.

He is the father of experimental philoſo-hy. It muſt indeed be confeſſed, that very rprizing ſecrets had been found out before is time. The ſea-compaſs, printing, engrav-g on copper-plates, oil-painting, looking-laſſes; the art of reſtoring, in ſome meaſure, ld men to their ſight by ſpectacles, gun-powder, c. had been diſcovered. A new world had een ſought for, found, and conquered. Would ot one ſuppoſe that theſe ſublime diſcoveries ad been made by the greateſt philoſophers, d in ages much more enlightened than the reſent? But it was far otherwiſe; all theſe reat changes happened in the moſt ſtupid and

barbarous times. Chance only gave birth to moſt of thoſe inventions; and it is very probable that what is called chance contributed very much to the diſcovery of America; at leaſt it has been always thought that Chriſtopher Columbus undertook his voyage merely on the relation of a captain of a ſhip, which a ſtorm had drove as far weſtward, as the Caribbee iſlands. Be this as it will, men had ſailed round the world, and could deſtroy cities by an artificial thunder, more dreadful than the real one: but, then they were not acquainted with the circulation of the blood, the weight of the air, the laws of motion, light, the number of our planets, etc. And a man who maintained a theſis on Ariſtotle's categories; on the univerſals *a parte rei*, or ſuch like nonſenſe, was looked upon as a prodigy.

The moſt aſtoniſhing, the moſt uſeful inventions, are not thoſe which reflect the greateſt honour on the human mind. It is to a mechanical inſtinct, which is found in many men, and not to true philoſophy, that moſt arts owe their origin.

The diſcovery of fire, the art of making bread, of melting and preparing metals, of building houſes, and the invention of the ſhuttle are infinitely more beneficial to mankind than printing or the ſea-compaſs: and yet theſe arts were invented by uncultivated, ſavage men.

What a prodigious uſe the Greeks and Romans made afterwards of mechanics! Nevertheleſs, they believed that there were cryſtal heavens; that the ſtars were ſmall lamps which ſometimes fell into the ſea; and one of their greateſt philoſophers, after long reſearches, found that the ſtars were ſo many flints which had been detached from the earth.

In a word, no one, before the lord Bacon, was acquainted with experimental philoſophy, nor with the ſeveral phyſical experiments which have been made ſince his time. Scarce one of them but is hinted at in his work, and he himſelf had made ſeveral. He made a kind of pneumatic engine, by which he gueſſed the elaſticity of the air. He approached, on all ſides as it were, to the diſcovery of its weight, and had very near attained it; but, ſome time after, Toricelli ſeized upon this truth. In a little time experimental philoſophy began to be cultivated on a ſudden in moſt parts of Europe. It was a hidden treaſure which the lord Bacon had ſome notion of, and which all the philoſophers, encouraged by his promiſes, endeavoured to dig up.

But that which ſurprized me moſt, was to find in his work, in expreſs terms, the new attraction, the invention of which is aſcribed to Sir Iſaac Newton.

We muſt ſearch, ſays lord Bacon, whether there may not be a kind of magnetic power,

which operates between the earth and heav bodies, between the moon and the ocean, be tween the planets, etc. In another place h ſays, either heavy bodies muſt be carried to wards the center of the earth, or muſt be re ciprocally attracted by it; and in the latter caſ it is evident, that the nearer bodies, in thei falling, draw towards the earth, the ſtronge they will attract one another. We muſt, ſay he, make an experiment, to ſee whether th ſame clock will go faſter on the top of a moun tain or at the bottom of a mine; whether th ſtrength of the weights decreaſes on the moun tain, and increaſes in the mine. It is probabl that the earth has a true attractive power.

This fore-runner in philoſophy was alſo a elegant writer, an hiſtorian, and a wit.

His moral eſſays are greatly eſteemed, b they were drawn up in the view of inſtructi rather than of pleaſing: and as they are not ſatire upon mankind, like Rochefoucault's ma ims, nor written upon a ſceptical plan, like Mo tagne's eſſays, they are not ſo much read theſe two ingenious authors.

His hiſtory of king Henry the ſeventh w looked upon as a maſter-piece; but how is poſſible that ſome perſons can preſume to co pare ſo little a work with the hiſtory of our ill ſtrious Thuanus.

Speaking about the famous impoſtor Perk

ſon to a converted * Jew, who aſſumed boldly the name and title of Richard the fourth, king of England, at the inſtigation of the ducheſs of Burgundy; and who diſputed the crown with Henry the ſeventh, the lord Bacon writes as follows:

"At this time the king began again to be "haunted with ſpirits, by the magic and curi- "ous arts of the lady Margaret; who raiſed "up the ghoſt of Richard duke of York, ſe- "cond ſon to king Edward the fourth, to walk "and vex the king." †

"After ſuch time as ſhe (Margaret of Bur- "gundy) thought he (Perkin Warbeck) was "perfect in his leſſon, ſhe began to caſt with "herſelf from what coaſt this blazing-ſtar "ſhould firſt appear, and at what time it muſt "be upon the horizon of Ireland; for there "had the like meteor ſtrong influence be- "fore." ¶

Methinks our ſagacious Thuanus does not give into ſuch fuſtian, which formerly was looked upon as ſublime, but in this age is juſtly called nonſenſe.

* John Oſbeck.

† The hiſtory of the reign of king Henry the ſeventh, page 112. London, printed in 1641. Folio.

¶ Idem, p. 116.

LETTER XIII.

OF Mr. LOCKE.

PERHAPS no man ever had a more judicious, or more methodical genius, or was a more acute logician, than Mr. Locke; and yet he was not deeply ſkilled in the mathematics. This great man could never ſubject himſelf to the tedious fatigue of calculations, nor to the dry purſuit of mathematical truths, which do not at firſt preſent any ſenſible objects to the mind; and no one has given better proofs than he, that it is poſſible for a man to have a geometrical head, without the aſſiſtance of geometry. Before his time, ſeveral great philoſophers had declared, in the moſt poſitive terms, what the ſoul of man is; but as theſe abſolutely knew nothing about it, they might very well be allowed to differ entirely in opinion from one another.

In Greece, the infant ſeat of arts and of errors, and where the grandeur as well as folly of the human mind went ſuch prodigious lengths, the people uſed to reaſon about the ſoul in the very ſame manner as we do.

The divine Anaxagoras, in whoſe honour an

ſtar was erected, for his having taught mankind that the Sun was greater than Peloponneſus, that ſnow was black, and that the heavens were of ſtone; affirmed that the ſoul was an aerial ſpirit, but at the ſame time immortal. Diogenes (not he who was a cynical philoſopher after having coined baſe money) declared that the ſoul was a portion of the ſubſtance of God; an idea which we muſt confeſs was very ſublime. Epicurus maintained that it was compoſed of parts in the ſame manner as the body.

Ariſtotle, who has been explained a thouſand ways, becauſe he is unintelligible, was of opinion, according to ſome of his diſciples, that the underſtanding in all men is one and the ſame ſubſtance.

The divine Plato, maſter of the divine Ariſtotle, and the divine Socrates, maſter of the divine Plato, uſed to ſay, that the ſoul was incorporeal and eternal. No doubt but the Demon of Socrates had inſtructed him in the nature of it. Some people, indeed, pretend, that a man, who boaſted his being attended by a familiar genius, muſt infallibly be either a knave or a madman; but this kind of people are ſeldom ſatisfied with any thing but reaſon.

With regard to the fathers of the church, ſeveral in the primitive ages believed that the ſoul was human, and the angels and God corporeal. Men naturally improve upon every

ſyſtem. St. Bernard, as father Mabillon confeſſes, taught that the ſoul after death does not ſee God in the celeſtial regions, but converſes with Chriſt's human nature only. However, he was not believed this time on his bare word; the adventure of the cruſade having a little ſunk the credit of his oracles. Afterward a thouſand ſchoolmen aroſe, ſuch as the irrefragable * doctor, the ſubtile doctor †, the angelic doctor ¶, the ſeraphic doctor ‡, and the cherubic doctor, who were all ſure that they had a very clear and diſtinct idea of the ſoul and yet wrote in ſuch a manner, that one would conclude they were reſolved no one ſhould underſtand a word in their writings. Our Des Cartes, born to diſcover the errors of antiquity, and at the ſame time to ſubſtitute his own and hurried away by that ſyſtematic ſpirit which throws a cloud over the minds of the greateſt men, thought that he had demonſtrated that the ſoul is the ſame thing as thought in the ſame manner as matter, in his opinion is the ſame as extenſion. He aſſerted, that man thinks eternally, and that the ſoul at its coming into the body, is informed with the whole ſeries of metaphyſical notions; knowing God, infinite ſpace, poſſeſſing all abſtract ideas; in a word, compleatly endued with the moſt

* Alexander de Hales. † Duns Scotus.

¶ St. Thomas. ‡ St. Bonaventure.

ſublime lights, which it unhappily forgets at its iſſuing out of the womb.

Father Malebranche, in his ſublime illuſions, not only admitted innate ideas, but did not doubt of our living wholly in God, and that God is, as it were, our ſoul.

Such a multitude of reaſoners having written the romance of the ſoul, a ſage at laſt aroſe, who gave, with an air of the greateſt modeſty, the hiſtory of it. Mr. Locke has diſplayed the human ſoul, in the ſame manner as an excellent anatomiſt explains the ſprings of the human body. He every where takes the light of phyſics for his guide. He ſometimes preſumes to ſpeak affirmatively, but then he preſumes alſo to doubt. Inſtead of concluding at once what we know not, he examines gradually what we would know. He takes an infant at the inſtant of his birth; he traces, ſtep by ſtep, the progreſs of his underſtanding; examines what thing he has in common with beaſts, and what he poſſeſſes above them. Above all he conſults himſelf; the being conſcious that he himſelf thinks.

I ſhall leave, ſays he, to thoſe who know more of this matter than myſelf, the examining whether the ſoul exiſts before or after the organization of bodies. But I confeſs that it is my lot to be animated with one of thoſe heavy ſouls which do not think always; and I am even ſo unhappy as not to conceive, that

it is more neceſſary the ſoul ſhould think perpetually, than that bodies ſhould be for ever in motion.

With regard to myſelf, I ſhall boaſt that I have the honour to be as ſtupid in this particular as Mr. Locke. No one ſhall ever make me believe, that I think always; and I am as little inclined as he could be, to fancy that ſome few weeks after I was conceived I was a very learned ſoul; knowing at that time a thouſand things that I forgot at my birth; and poſſeſſing when in the womb (though to no manner of purpoſe) knowledge which I loſt the inſtant I had occaſion for it; and which I have never ſince been able to recover perfectly.

Mr. Locke after having deſtroyed innate ideas; after having fully renounced the vanity of believing that we think always; after having laid down, from the moſt ſolid principles, that ideas enter the mind through the ſenſes; having examined our ſimple and complex ideas; having traced the human mind through its ſeveral operations; having ſhewed that all the languages of the world are imperfect, and the great abuſe that is made of words every moment; he at laſt comes to conſider the extent or rather the narrow limits of human knowlege. It was in this chapter he preſumed to advance, but very modeſtly, the following words, "We ſhall, perhaps, never be ca-

"pable of knowing, whether a being, purely "material, thinks or not." This ſage aſſertion was, by more divines than one, looked upon as a ſcandalous declaration that the ſoul is material and mortal. Some Engliſhmen, devout after their way, founded an alarm. The ſuperſtitious are the ſame in ſociety as cowards in an army; they themſelves are ſeized with a panic fear, and communicate it to others. It was loudly exclaimed, that Mr. Locke intended to deſtroy religion; nevertheleſs religion had nothing to do in the affair, it being a queſtion purely philoſophical, altogether independent on faith and revelation. Mr. Locke's opponents needed but to examine, calmly and impartially, whether the declaring that matter can think, implies a contradiction; and whether God is able to communicate thought to matter. But divines are too apt to begin their declarations with ſaying, that God is offended when people differ from them in opinion; in which they too much reſemble the bad poets, who uſed to declare publicly that Boileau ſpake irreverently of Lewis the fourteenth, becauſe he ridiculed their ſtupid productions. Biſhop Stillingfleet got the reputation of a calm and unprejudiced divine, becauſe he did not expreſly make uſe of injurious terms in his diſpute with Mr. Locke. That divine entered the liſts againſt him, but was defeated; for he argued as a ſchoolman, and Locke as a phi-

loſopher, who was perfectly acquainted with the ſtrong as well as the weak ſide of the human mind, and who fought with weapons whoſe temper he knew. If I might preſume to give my opinion on ſo delicate a ſubject after Mr. Locke, I would ſay, that men have long diſputed on the nature and the immortality of the ſoul. With regard to its immortality, it is impoſſible to give a demonſtration of it, ſince its nature is ſtill the ſubject of controverſy; which however muſt be throughly underſtood, before a perſon can be able to determine whether it be immortal or not. Human reaſon is ſo little able, merely by its own ſtrength, to demonſtrate the immortality of the ſoul, that it was abſolutely neceſſary religion ſhould reveal it to us. It is of advantage to ſociety in general, that mankind ſhould believe the ſoul to be immortal; faith commands us to this; nothing more is required, and the matter is cleared up at once. But it is otherwiſe with reſpect to its nature; it is of little importance to religion, which only requires the ſoul to be virtuous, what ſubſtance it be made of. It is a clock which is given us to regulate, but the artiſt has not told us of what materials the ſpring of the clock is compoſed.

I am a body, and I think, that is all I know of the matter. Shall I aſcribe to an unknown cauſe, what I can ſo eaſily impute to the only ſecond cauſe I am acquainted with? here all

† This is the Atheiſtical Doctrine

the ſchool philoſophers interrupt me with their arguments, and declare that there is only extenſion and ſolidity in bodies, and that there they can have nothing but motion and figure. Now motion, figure, extenſion and ſolidity cannot form a thought, and conſequently the ſoul cannot be matter. All this, ſo often repeated, mighty ſeries of reaſoning amounts to no more than this; I am abſolutely ignorant what matter is; I gueſs but imperfectly ſome properties of it; now, I abſolutely cannot tell whether theſe properties may be joined to thought. As I therefore know nothing, I maintain poſitively that matter cannot think. In this manner do the ſchools reaſon.

Mr. Locke addreſſed theſe gentlemen in the candid, ſincere manner following. At leaſt confeſs yourſelves to be as ignorant as I. Neither your imaginations nor mine are able to comprehend in what manner a body is ſuſceptible of ideas; and do you conceive better in what manner a ſubſtance of what kind ſoever, is ſuſceptible of them? as you cannot comprehend either matter or ſpirit, why will you preſume to aſſert any thing?

The ſuperſtitious man comes afterwards, and declares that all thoſe muſt be burnt for the good of their ſouls, who ſo much as ſuſpect that it is poſſible for the body to think without any foreign aſſiſtance. But what would theſe people ſay ſhould they themſelves

be proved irreligious? and indeed what man can presumed to assert, without being guilty at the same time of the greatest impiety, that it is impossible for the Creator to form matter with thought and sensation? Consider only, I beg you, what a dilemma you bring yourselves into; you who confine in this manner the power of the Creator. Beasts have the same organs, the same sensations, the same perceptions as we; they have memory, and combine certain ideas. In case it was not in the power of God to animate matter, and inform it with sensation, the consequence would be, either that beasts are mere machines, or that they have a spiritual soul.

Methinks it is clearly evident that beasts cannot be mere machines, which I prove thus. God has given them the same organs of sensation as to us: if therefore they have no sensation, God has created an useless thing; now, according to your own confession, God does nothing in vain; he therefore did not create so many organs of sensation, merely for them to be uninformed with this faculty; consequently beasts are not mere machines. Beasts, according to your assertion, cannot be animated with a spiritual soul; you will therefore, in spite of yourself, be reduced to this only assertion, viz. that God has endued the organs of beasts, who are mere matter, with the faculties of sensation and perception, which you

call inſtinct in them. But why may not God, if he pleaſes, communicate to our more delicate organs that faculty of feeling, perceiving, and thinking, which we call human reaſon? To whatever ſide you turn, you are forced to acknowlege your own ignorance, and the boundleſs power of the Creator. Exclaim therefore no more againſt the ſage, the modeſt philoſophy of Mr. Locke, which, ſo far from interfering with religion, would be of uſe to demonſtrate the truth of it, in caſe religion wanted any ſuch ſupport. For what philoſophy can be of a more religious nature than that, which affirming nothing but what it conceives clearly, and conſcious of its own weakneſs, declares that we muſt always have recourſe to God in our examining of the firſt principles.

Beſides, we muſt not be apprehenſive, that any philoſophical opinion will ever prejudice the religion of a country. Though our demonſtrations claſh directly with our myſteries, that is nothing to the purpoſe, for the latter are not leſs revered upon that account by our Chriſtian philoſophers, who know very well that the objects of reaſon and thoſe of faith are of a very different nature. Philoſophers will never form a religious ſect, the reaſon of which is, their writings are not calculated for the vulgar, and they themſelves are free from enthuſiaſm. If we divide mankind into

twenty parts, it will be found that nineteen of theſe conſiſts of perſons employed in manual labour, who will never know that ſuch a man as Mr. Locke ever exiſted. In the remaining twentieth part, how few are readers! and among ſuch as are ſo, twenty amuſe themſelves with romances to one who ſtudies philoſophy. The thinking part of mankind are confined to a very ſmall number, and theſe will never diſturb the peace and tranquillity of the world.

Neither Montagne, Locke, Bayle, Spinoza, Hobbes, the lord Shaftsbury, Collins nor Toland, lighted up the firebrand of diſcord in their countries; this has generally been the work of divines, who being at firſt puffed up with the ambition of becoming chiefs of a ſect, ſoon grew very deſirous of being at the head of a party. But what do I ſay? all the works of the modern philoſophers put together will never make ſo much noiſe as even the diſpute which aroſe among the Franciſcans, merely about the faſhion of their ſleeves and of their cowls.

LETTER XIV.

OF DES CARTES AND SIR ISAAC NEWTON.

A Frenchman, who arrives in London, will find philoſophy like every thing elſe very much changed there. He had left the world a *plenum*, and he now finds it a *vacuum*. At Paris the univerſe is ſeen compoſed of vortices of ſubtile matter; but nothing like it is ſeen in London. In France it is the preſſure of the moon that cauſes the tides; but in England it is the ſea that gravitates towards the moon; ſo that when you think that the moon ſhould make it flood with us, thoſe gentlemen fancy it ſhould be ebb, which, very unluckily, cannot be proved. For to be able to do this, it is neceſſary the moon and the tides ſhould have been enquired into, at the very inſtant of the creation.

You will obſerve farther, that the ſun, which in France is ſaid to have nothing to do in the affair, comes in here for very near a quarter of its aſſiſtance. According to your Carteſians, every thing is performed by an impulſion, of which we have very little notion; and ac-

cording to Sir Iſaac Newton, it is by an attraction, the cauſe of which is as much unknown to us. At Paris you imagine that the earth is ſhaped like a melon, or of an oblique figure; at London it has an oblate one. A Carteſian declares that light exiſts in the air; but a Newtonian aſſerts that it comes from the ſun in ſix minutes and a half. The ſeveral operations of your chymiſtry are performed by acids, alkalies, and ſubtile matter; but attraction prevails even in chymiſtry among the Engliſh.

The very eſſence of things is totally changed. You neither are agreed upon the definition of the ſoul, nor on that of matter. Des Cartes, as I obſerved in my laſt, maintains that the ſoul is the ſame thing with thought; and Mr. Locke has given a pretty good proof of the contrary.

Des Cartes aſſerts farther, that extenſion alone conſtitutes matter, but Sir Iſaac adds ſolidity to it.

How furiouſly contradictory are theſe opinions!

Non noſtrum inter vos tantas componere lites.

Virg. Eclog. 3.

'Tis not for us to end ſuch great diſputes.

This famous Newton, this deſtroyer of the Carteſian ſyſtem, died in March Anno 1727.

His countrymen honoured him in his life-time, and interred him as though he had been a king who had made his people happy.

The Engliſh read with the higheſt ſatisfaction, and tranſlated into their tongue, the elogium of Sir Iſaac Newton, which M. de Fontenelle ſpoke in the academy of ſciences. M. de Fontenelle preſides as judge over philoſophers: and the Engliſh expected his deciſion, as a ſolemn declaration of the ſuperiority of the Engliſh philoſophy over that of the French. But when it was found that this gentleman had compared Des Cartes to Sir Iſaac, the whole Royal ſociety in London roſe up in arms. So far from acquieſcing with M. Fontenelle's judgment, they criticiſed his diſcourſe. And even ſeveral (who however were not the ableſt philoſophers in that body) were offended at the compariſon; and for no other reaſon but becauſe Des Cartes was a Frenchman.

It muſt be confeſſed that theſe two great men differed very much in conduct, in fortune and in philoſophy.

Nature had indulged Des Cartes a ſhining and ſtrong imagination, whence he became a very ſingular perſon both in private life, and in his manner of reaſoning. This imagination could not conceal itſelf even in his philoſophical works, which are every where adorned with very ſhining, ingenious metaphors and figures. Nature had almoſt made him a poet;

and indeed he wrote a piece of poetry for the entertainment of Chriſtina queen of Sweden, which however was ſuppreſſed in honour to his memory.

He embraced a military life for ſome time, and afterwards becoming a complete philoſopher, he did not think the paſſion of love derogatory to his character. He had by his miſtreſs a daughter called Froncine, who died young, and was very much regretted by him. Thus he experienced every paſſion incident to mankind.

He was a long time of opinion, that it would be neceſſary for him to fly from the ſociety of his fellow creatures, and eſpecially from his native countrymen, in order to enjoy the happineſs of cultivating his philoſophical ſtudies in full liberty.

Des Cartes was very right; for his contemporaries were not knowing enough to improve and enlighten his underſtanding, and were capable of little elſe than of giving him uneaſineſs.

He left France purely to go in ſearch of truth, which was then perſcuted by the wretched philoſophy of the ſchools However, he found that reaſon was as much diſguiſed and depraved in the univerſities of Holland, into which he withdrew, as in his own country. For at the time that the French condemned the only propoſitions of his philoſophy which

were true, he was perſecuted by the pretended philoſophers of Holland, who underſtood him no better; and who, having a nearer view of his glory, hated his perſon the more, ſo that he was obliged to leave Utrecht. Des Cartes was injuriouſly accuſed of being an atheiſt, the laſt refuge of religious ſcandal: and he who had employed all the ſagacity and penetration of his genius, in ſearching for new proofs of the exiſtence of a God, was ſuſpected to believe there was no ſuch being.

Such a perſecution from all ſides muſt neceſſarily ſuppoſe a moſt exalted merit, as well as very diſtinguiſhed reputation: and indeed he poſſeſſed both. Reaſon at that time darted a ray upon the world through the gloom of the ſchools, and the prejudices of popular ſuperſtition. At laſt his name ſpread ſo univerſally, that the French were deſirous of bringing him back into his native country by rewards, and accordingly offered him an annual penſion of a thouſand crowns. Upon theſe hopes Des Cartes returned to France; paid the fees of his patent, which was ſold at that time, but no penſion was ſettled upon him. Thus diſappointed, he returned to his ſolitude in North Holland, where he again purſued the ſtudy of philoſophy, whilſt the great Galileo, at fourſcore years of age, was groaning in the priſons of the inquiſition, only for having demonſtrated the earth's motion.

At laſt Des Cartes was ſnatched from the world in the flower of his age at Stockholm. His death was owing to a bad regimen, and he expired in the midſt of ſome literati who were his enemies, and under the hands of a phyſician to whom he was odious.

The progreſs of Sir Iſaac Newton's life was quite different. He lived happy, and very much honoured in his native country, to the age of fourſcore and five years.

It was his peculiar felicity, not only to be born in a country of liberty, but in an age when all ſcholaſtic impertinences were baniſhed from the world. Reaſon alone was cultivated, and mankind could only be his pupil, not his enemy.

One very ſingular difference in the lives of theſe two great men is, that Sir Iſaac, during the long courſe of years he enjoyed, was never ſenſible to any paſſion, was not ſubject to the common frailties of mankind, nor ever had any commerce with women; a circumſtance which was aſſured me by the phyſician and ſurgeon who attended him in his laſt moments.

We may admire Sir Iſaac Newton on this occaſion, but then we muſt not cenſure Des Cartes.

The opinion that generally prevails in England with regard to theſe new philoſophers is,

that the latter was a dreamer, and the former a ſage.

Very few people in England read Des Cartes, whoſe works indeed are now uſeleſs. On the other ſide, but a ſmall number peruſe thoſe of Sir Iſaac, becauſe to do this the ſtudent muſt be deeply ſkilled in the mathematics, otherwiſe thoſe works will be unintelligible to him. But notwithſtanding this, theſe great men are the ſubject of every one's diſcourſe. Sir Iſaac Newton is allowed every advantage, whilſt Des Cartes is not indulged a ſingle one. According to ſome, it is to the former that we owe the diſcovery of a vacuum, that the air is a heavy body, and the invention of teleſcopes. In a word, Sir Iſaac Newton is here as the Hercules of fabulous ſtory, to whom the ignorant aſcribed all the feats of ancient heroes.

In a critique that was made in London on M. de Fontenelle's diſcourſe, the writer preſumed to aſſert that Des Cartes was not a great geometrician. Thoſe who make ſuch a declaration may be reproached with flying in their maſter's face. Des Cartes extended the limits of geometry as far beyond the place where he found them, as Sir Iſaac did after him. The former firſt taught the method of expreſſing curves by equations. This geometry, which, thanks to him for it, is now grown common, was ſo abſtruſe in his time, that not ſo much

as one professor would undertake to explain it, and Schotten in Holland, and Format in France were the only men who understood it.

He applied his geometrical and inventive genius to dioptrics, which, when treated of by him, became a new art. And if he was mistaken in some things, the reason of that is, a man who discovers a new tract of land cannot at once know all the properties of the soil. Those who come after him, and make these lands fruitful, are at least obliged to him for the discovery. I will not deny but there are innumerable errors in the rest of Des Cartes' works.

Geometry was a guide he himself had in some measure fashioned, which would have conducted him safely through the several paths of natural philosophy. Nevertheless he at last abandoned this guide, and gave entirely into the forming hypotheses; and then philosophy was no more than an ingenious romance, fit only to amuse the ignorant. He was mistaken in the nature of the soul, in the proofs of the existence of a God, in matter, in the laws of motion, and in the nature of light. He admitted innate ideas, he invented new elements, he created a world; he made man according to his own fancy; and it is justly said, that the man of Des Cartes is in fact that of Des Cartes only, very different from the real one.

He puſhed his metaphyſical errors ſo far, as to declare that two and two make four, for no other reaſon but becauſe God would have it ſo. However it will not be making him too great a compliment if we affirm that he was valuable even in his miſtakes. He deceived himſelf, but then it was at leaſt in a methodical way. He deſtroyed all the abſurd chimeras with which youth had been infatuated for two thouſand years. He taught his contemporaries how to reaſon, and enabled them to employ his own weapons againſt himſelf. If Des Cartes did not pay in good money, he however did great ſervice in crying down that of a baſe alloy.

I indeed believe, that very few will preſume to compare his philoſophy in any reſpect with that of Sir Iſaac Newton. The former is an eſſay, the latter a maſter-piece: but then the man, who firſt brought us to the path of truth, was, perhaps, as great a genius as he who afterwards conducted us thro' it.

Des Cartes gave ſight to the blind. Theſe ſaw the errors of antiquity and of the ſciences. The path he ſtruck out is ſince become boundleſs. Rohault's little work was during ſome years a compleat ſyſtem of phyſics: but now all the tranſactions of the ſeveral academies in Europe put together do not

form ſo much as the beginning of a ſyſtem. In fathoming this abyſs no bottom has been found. We are now to examine what diſcoveries Sir Iſaac Newton has made in it.

LETTER XV.

OF ATTRACTION.

THE diſcoveries, which gained Sir Iſaac Newton ſo univerſal a reputation, relate o the ſyſtem of the world, to light, to geo- etrical infinites, and laſtly to chronology, ith which he uſed to amuſe himſelf after the atigue of his ſeverer ſtudies.

I will now acquaint you (without prolixity poſſible) with the few things I have been a- le to comprehend of all theſe ſublime ideas. With regard to the ſyſtem of our world, diſ- utes were a long time maintained, on the auſe that turns the planets, and keeps them in eir orbits; and on thoſe cauſes which make ll bodies here below deſcend to the ſurface of e earth.

The ſyſtem of Des Cartes, explained and mproved ſince his time, ſeemed to give a plau- ible reaſon for all thoſe phaenomena; and his reaſon ſeemed more juſt, as it is ſimple, nd intelligible to all capacities. But in phi- oſophy a ſtudent ought to doubt of the things e fancies he underſtands too eaſily, as much of thoſe he does not underſtand.

Gravity, the falling of accelerated bodies on the earth, the revolution of the planets in their orbits, their rotations round their axes, all this is mere motion. Now motion cannot perhaps be conceived any otherwiſe than by impulſion; therefore all theſe bodies muſt be impelled. But by what are they impelled? all ſpace is full, it therefore is filled with a very ſubtile matter, ſince this is imperceptible to us; this matter goes from weſt to eaſt, ſince all the planets are carried from weſt to eaſt. Thus from hypotheſes to hypotheſes, from one appearance to another, philoſophers have imagined a vaſt whirlpool of ſubtile matter, in which the planets are carried round the ſun, they alſo have created another particular vortex which floats in the great one, and which turns daily round the planets. When all this is done, it is pretended that gravity depends on this diurnal motion; for, ſay theſe, the velocity of the ſubtile matter that turns round our little vortex muſt be ſeventeen times more rapid than that of the earth; or, in caſe its velocity is ſeventeen times greater than that of the earth, its centrifugal force muſt be vaſtly greater, and conſequently impell all bodies towards the earth. This is the cauſe of gravity according to the Carteſian ſyſtem. But the theoriſt, before he calculated the centrifugal force and velocity of the ſubtile matter, ſhould firſt have been certain that it exiſted.

Sir Iſaac Newton ſeems to have deſtroyed all theſe great and little vortices, both that which carries the planets round the ſun, as well as the other which ſuppoſes every planet to turn upon its own axis.

Firſt, with regard to the pretended little vortex of the earth, it is demonſtrated that it muſt loſe its motion by inſenſible degrees; it is demonſtrated, that if the earth ſwims in a fluid, its denſity muſt be equal to that of the earth; and in caſe its denſity be the ſame, all the bodies we endeavour to move muſt meet with an inſuperable reſiſtance.

With regard to the great vortices, they are ſtill more chimerical, and it is impoſſible to make them agree with Kepler's law, the truth of which has been demonſtrated. Sir Iſaac ſhews, that the revolution of the fluid, in which Jupiter is ſuppoſed to be carried, is not the ſame with regard to the revolution of the fluid of the earth, as the revolution of Jupiter with reſpect to that of the earth. He proves, that as the planets make their revolutions in ellipſes, and conſequently being at a much greater diſtance one from the other in the Aphelia, and a little nearer in their Perihelia; the earth's velocity, for inſtance, ought to be greater when it is nearer Venus and Mars, becauſe the fluid that carries it along, being then more preſſed, ought to

have a greater motion; and yet it is even then that the earth's motion is ſlower.

He proves that there is no ſuch thing as a celeſtial matter which goes from weſt to eaſt, ſince the comets traverſe thoſe ſpaces, ſometimes from eaſt to weſt, and at other times from north to ſouth.

In fine, the better to reſolve, if poſſible, every difficulty, he proves, and even by experiments, that it is impoſſible there ſhould be a plenum; and brings back the vacuum, which Ariſtotle and Des Cartes had baniſhed from the world.

Having by theſe and ſeveral other arguments deſtroyed the Carteſian vortices, he deſpaired of ever being able to diſcover, whether there is a ſecret principle in nature, which, at the ſame time is the cauſe of the motion of all celeſtial bodies, and that of gravity on the earth. But being retired in 1666, upon account of the plague, to a ſolitude near Cambridge; as he was walking one day in his garden, and ſaw ſome fruits fall from a tree, he fell into a profound meditation on that gravity, the cauſe of which had ſo long been ſought, but in vain, by all the philoſophers, whilſt the vulgar think there is nothing myſterious in it. He ſaid to himſelf, that from what height ſoever, in our hemiſphere, thoſe bodies might deſcend, their fall would certainly be in the progreſſion diſcovered by Galileo; and the ſpaces

they run thro' would be as the ſquare of the times. Why may not this power which cauſes heavy bodies to deſcend, and is the ſame without any ſenſible diminution at the remoteſt diſtance from the center of the earth, or on the ſummits of the higheſt mountains; why, ſaid Sir Iſaac, may not this power extend as high as the moon? and in caſe its influence reaches ſo far, is it not very probable that this power retains it in its orbit, and determines its motion? but in caſe the moon obeys this principle, whatever it be, may we not conclude very naturally, that the reſt of the planets are equally ſubject to it? in caſe this power exiſts, which beſides is proved, it muſt increaſe in an inverſe ratio of the ſquares of the diſtances. All therefore that remains is, to examine how far a heavy body, which ſhould fall upon the earth from a moderate height, would go; and how far in the ſame time, a body which ſhould fall from the orbit of the moon, would deſcend. To find this nothing is wanted but the meaſure of the earth, and the diſtance of the moon from it.

Thus Sir Iſaac Newton reaſoned. But at that time the Engliſh had but a very imperfect meaſure of our globe, and depended on the uncertain ſuppoſition of mariners, who computed a degree to contain but ſixty Engliſh miles, whereas it conſiſts in reality of very near ſeventy. As this falſe computation did not agree with the concluſions which Sir Iſaac in-

tended to draw from them, he laid aſide this purſuit. A half-learned philoſopher, remarkable only for his vanity, would have made the meaſure of the earth agree, any how, with his ſyſtem: Sir Iſaac, however, choſe rather to quit the reſearches he was then engaged in. But after Mr. Picart had meaſured the earth exactly, by tracing that meridian, which redounds ſo much to the honour of the French, Sir Iſaac Newton reſumed his former reflexions, and found his account in Mr. Picart's calculation.

A circumſtance which has always appeared wonderful to me is, that ſuch ſublime diſcoveries ſhould have been made by the ſole aſſiſtance of a quadrant and a little arithmetic.

The circumference of the earth is one hundred twenty three millions, two hundred forty nine thouſand ſix hundred feet. This, among other things, is neceſſary to prove the ſyſtem of attraction.

The inſtant we know the earth's circumference, and the diſtance of the moon, we know that of the moon's orbit, and the diameter of this orbit. The moon performs its revolution in that orbit in twenty ſeven days, ſeven hours, forty three minutes. It is demonſtrated, that the moon in its mean motion makes an hundred and fourſcore and ſeven thouſand, nine hundred and ſixty feet (of Paris) in a minute. It is likewiſe demonſtrated

by a known theorem, that the central force which ſhould make a body fall from the height of the moon, would make its velocity no more than fifteen Paris feet in a minute of time. Now, if the law by which bodies gravitate, and attract one another in an inverſe ratio of the ſquares of the diſtances be true; if the ſame power acts, according to that law, throughout all nature; it is evident that as the earth is ſixty ſemi-diameters diſtant from the moon, a heavy body muſt neceſſarily fall (on the earth) fifteen feet in the firſt ſecond, and fifty four thouſand feet in the firſt minute.

Now a heavy body falls, in reality, fifteen feet in the firſt ſecond, and goes in the firſt minute fifty four thouſand feet, which number is the ſquare of ſixty multiplied by fifteen. Bodies therefore gravitate in an inverſe ratio of the ſquares of the diſtances; conſequently, what cauſes gravity on the earth, and keeps the moon in its orbit, is one and the ſame power; it being demonſtrated that the moon gravitates on the earth, which is the center of its particular motion, it is demonſtrated that the earth and the moon gravitate on the ſun, which is the center of their annual motion.

The reſt of the planets muſt be ſubject to this general law; and, if this law exiſts, theſe planets muſt follow the laws which Kepler diſcovered. All theſe laws, all theſe relations are indeed obſerved by the planets with the ut-

moſt exactneſs; therefore the power of attraction cauſes all the planets to gravitate towards the ſun, in like manner as the moon gravitates towards our globe.

Finally, as in all bodies, re-action is equal to action, it is certain that the earth gravitates alſo towards the moon; and that the ſun gravitates towards both: that every one of the ſatellites of Saturn gravitates towards the other four, and the other four towards it; all five towards Saturn, and Saturn towards all. That it is the ſame with regard to Jupiter; and that all theſe globes are attracted by the ſun, which is reciprocally attracted by them.

This power of gravitation acts proportionably to the quantity of matter in bodies, a truth which Sir Iſaac has demonſtrated by experiments. This new diſcovery has been of uſe to ſhew, that the ſun (the center of the planetary ſyſtem) attracts them all in a direct ratio of their quantity of matter combined with their nearneſs. From hence Sir Iſaac, riſing by degrees to diſcoveries which ſeemed not to be formed for the human mind, is bold enough to compute the quantity of matter contained in the ſun and in every planet; and in this manner ſhews, from the ſimple law of mechanics, that every celeſtial globe ought neceſſarily to be where it is placed.

His bare principle of the laws of gravitation accounts for all the apparent inequalities in

the courſe of the celeſtial globes. The variations of the moon are a neceſſary conſequence of thoſe laws. Moreover the reaſon is evidently ſeen why the nodes of the moon perform their revolutions in nineteen years, and thoſe of the earth in about twenty ſix thouſand. The ſeveral appearances obſerved in the tides are alſo a very ſimple effect of this attraction. The proximity of the moon when at the full, and when it is new, and its diſtance in the quadratures or quarters combined with the action of the ſun, exhibit a ſenſible reaſon why the ocean ſwells and ſinks.

After having ſhewn, by his ſublime theory, the courſe and inequalities of the planets, he ſubjects comets to the ſame law. The orbit of theſe fires (unknown for ſo great a ſeries of years) which was the terror of mankind, and the rock againſt which philoſophy ſplit; placed by Ariſtotle below the moon, and ſent back by Des Cartes above the ſphere of Saturn, is at laſt placed in its proper ſeat by Sir Iſaac Newton.

He proves that comets are ſolid bodies which move in the ſphere of the ſun's activity; and that they deſcribe an ellipſis ſo very eccentric, and ſo near to parabolas, that certain comets muſt take up above five hundred years in their revolution.

The learned Dr. Halley is of opinion, that the comet ſeen in 1680, is the ſame which ap-

peared in Julius Caeſar's time. This ſhews more than any other, that comets are hard, opake bodies; for it deſcended ſo near to the ſun, as to come within a ſixth part of the diameter of this planet from it; and conſequently might have contracted a degree of heat two thouſand times ſtronger than that of red hot iron; and would have been ſoon diſperſed in vapour, had in not been a firm, denſe body. The gueſſing the courſe of comets began then to be very much in vogue; the celebrated Bernoulli concluded by his ſyſtem, that the famous comet of 1680, would appear again the 17th of May 1719. Not a ſingle aſtronomer in Europe went to bed that night; however they needed not to have broke their reſt, for the famous comet never appeared. There is at leaſt more cunning, if not more certainty, in fixing its return to ſo remote a diſtance as five hundred and ſeventy five years. As to Mr. Whiſton, he affirmed very ſeriouſly, that in the time of the deluge a comet overflowed the terreſtrial globe; and he was ſo unreaſonable as to wonder how people laughed at him for making ſuch an aſſertion. The ancients were almoſt in the ſame way of thinking with Mr. Whiſton, and fancied that comets were always the forerunners of ſome great calamity which was to befal mankind. Sir Iſaac Newton, on the contrary, ſuſpected that they are very beneficent; and that vapours exhale from

them merely to nouriſh and vivify the planets, which imbibe in their courſe the ſeveral particles the ſun has detached from the comets: an opinion which at leaſt is more probable than the former. But this is not all. If this power of gravitation or attraction acts on all the celeſtial globes, it acts undoubtedly on the ſeveral parts of theſe globes. For in caſe bodies attract one another in proportion to the quantity of matter contained in them, it can only be in proportion to the quantity of their parts; and if this power is found in the whole, it is undoubtedly in the half, in the quarter, in the eighth part, and ſo on in infinitum.

This is attraction, the great ſpring by which all nature is moved. Sir Iſaac Newton, after having demonſtrated the exiſtence of this principle, plainly foreſaw that its very name would offend; and therefore this philoſopher in more places than one of his books, gives the reader ſome caution about it. He bids him beware of confounding this name with what the ancients called occult qualities; but to be ſatisfied with knowing that there is in all bodies a central force which acts to the utmoſt limits of the univerſe, according to the invariable laws of mechanics.

It is ſurpriſing, after the ſolemn proteſtations Sir Iſaac made, that ſuch eminent men as Mr. Sorin and Mr. de Fontenelle, ſhould have imputed to this great philoſopher the verbal

and chimerical way of reaſoning of the Ariſtotelians: Mr. Sorin in the memoirs of the academy of 1709, and Mr. de Fontenelle in the very elogium of Sir Iſaac Newton.

Moſt of the French, the learned and others, have repeated this reproach. Theſe are for ever crying out, Why did he not employ the word impulſion, which is ſo well underſtood, rather than that of attraction, which is ſo unintelligible?

Sir Iſaac might have anſwered theſe critics thus: Firſt, you have as imperfect an idea of the word impulſion as of that of attraction; and in caſe you cannot conceive how one body tends towards the center of another body, neither can you conceive by what power one body can impel another.

Secondly, I could not admit of impulſion; for to do this I muſt have known that a celeſtial matter was the agent; but ſo far from knowing that there is any ſuch matter, I have proved it to be merely imaginary.

Thirdly, I uſe the word attraction for no other reaſon, but to expreſs a defect which I diſcovered in nature; a certain and indiſputable effect of an unknown principle; a quality inherent in matter, the cauſe of which perſons of greater abilities than I can pretend to, may, if they can, find out.

What have you then taught us? will theſe people ſay further; and to what purpoſe are

ſo many calculations to tell us what you yourſelf do not comprehend?

I have taught you, may Sir Iſaac rejoin, that all bodies gravitate towards one another in proportion to their quantity of matter; that theſe central forces alone keep the planets and comets in their orbits, and cauſe them to move in the proportion before ſet down. I demonſtrate to you, that it is impoſſible there ſhould be any other cauſe which keeps the planets in their orbits, than that general phaenomenon of gravity. For heavy bodies fall on the earth according to the proportion demonſtrated of central forces; and the planets finiſhing their courſe according to the ſame proportions, in caſe there were another power that acted upon all theſe bodies, it would either increaſe their velocity, or change their direction. Now not one of theſe bodies ever has a ſingle degree of motion or velocity, or has any direction but what is demonſtrated to be the effect of the central forces; conſequently it is impoſſible their ſhould be any other principle.

Give me leave once more to introduce Sir Iſaac ſpeaking: ſhall he not be allowed to ſay, My caſe and that of the ancients is very different? Theſe ſaw, for inſtance, water aſcend in pumps, and ſaid, the water riſes becauſe it abhors a *vacuum*. But with regard to myſelf, I am in the caſe of a man who ſhould have firſt obſerved that water aſcends in pumps, but

ſhould leave others to explain the cauſe of this effect. The anatomiſt who firſt declared, that the motion of the arm is owing to the contraction of the muſcles, taught mankind an indiſputable truth; but are they leſs obliged to him becauſe he did not know the reaſon why the muſcles contract? The cauſe of the elaſticity of the air is unknown, but he who firſt diſcovered this ſpring performed a very ſignal ſervice to natural philoſophy. The ſpring that I diſcovered was more hidden and more univerſal, and for that very reaſon mankind ought to thank me the more. I have diſcovered a new property of matter, one of the ſecrets of the Creator; and have calculated and diſcovered the effects of it. After this ſhall people quarrel with me about the name I gave it?

Vortices may be called an occult quality becauſe their exiſtence was never proved: attraction on the contrary is a real thing, becauſe its effects are demonſtrated, and the proportions of it are calculated. The cauſe of this cauſe is among the arcana of the Almighty.

Procedes huc, et non amplius.

Hither thou ſhalt go, and no farther.

LETTER XVI.

OF SIR ISAAC NEWTON's OPTICS.

THE philoſophers of the laſt age found out a new univerſe; and a circumſtance which made its diſcovery more difficult was, that no one had ſo much as ſuſpected its exiſtence. The moſt ſage and judicious were of opinion, that it was a frantic raſhneſs to dare ſo much as to imagine, that it was poſſible to gueſs the laws by which the celeſtial bodies move, and the manner how light acts. Galileo, by his aſtronomical diſcoveries, Kepler by his calculations, Des Cartes (at leaſt in his dioptrics, and Sir Iſaac Newton in all his works) ſeverally ſaw the mechaniſm of the ſprings of the world. The geometricians have ſubjected infinity to the laws of calculation. The circulation of the blood in animals, and of the ſap in vegetables, have changed the face of nature with regard to us. A new kind of exiſtence has been given to bodies in the air-pump. By the aſſiſtance of teleſcopes bodies have been brought nearer to one another. Finally, the ſeveral diſcoveries which Sir Iſaac Newton has

made on light, are equal to the boldeſt things which the curioſity of men could expect, after ſo many philoſophical novelties.

Till Antonio de Dominis the rainbow was conſidered as an inexplicable miracle. This philoſopher gueſſed, that it was a neceſſary effect of the ſun and rain. Des Cartes gained immortal fame by his mathematical explication of this ſo natural a phaenomenon. He calculated the reflections and refractions of light in drops of rain; and his ſagacity on this occaſion was at that time looked upon as next to divine.

But what would he have ſaid had it been proved to him, that he was miſtaken in the nature of light; that he had not the leaſt reaſon to maintain that it is a globular body; that it is falſe to aſſert, that this matter, ſpreading itſelf through the whole, waits only to be projected forward by the ſun, in order to be put in action, in like manner as a long ſtaff acts at one end when puſhed forward by the other; that light is certainly darted by the ſun; in fine, that light is tranſmitted from the ſun to the earth in about ſeven minutes, though a cannon ball, which were not to loſe any of its velocity, could not go that diſtance in leſs than twenty five years? How great would have been his aſtoniſhment, had he been told, that light does not reflect directly by impinging againſt the ſolid parts of bodies; that bodies are not tranſ-

parent when they have large pores; and that a man ſhould ariſe, who would demonſtrate all theſe paradoxes, and anatomize a ſingle ray of light with more dexterity than the ableſt artiſt diſſects a human body! This man is come. Sir Iſaac Newton has demonſtrated to the eye, by the bare aſſiſtance of the priſm, that light is a compoſition of coloured rays, which, being united, form white colour. A ſingle ray is by him divided into ſeven, which all fall upon a piece of linen, or a ſheet of white paper, in their order one above the other, and at unequal diſtances. The firſt is red, the ſecond orange, the third yellow, the fourth green, the fifth blue, the ſixth indigo, the ſeventh a violet purple. Each of theſe rays, tranſmitted afterwards by an hundred other priſms, will never change the colour it bears; in like manner as gold, when compleatly purged from its droſs, will never change afterwards in the crucible. As a ſuperabundant proof that each of theſe elementary rays has inherently in itſelf that which forms its colour to the eye, take a ſmall piece of yellow wood for inſtance, and ſet it in the ray of a red colour, this wood will inſtantly be tinged red; but ſet it in the ray of a green colour, it aſſumes a green colour, and ſo of all the reſt.

From what cauſe therefore do colours ariſe in nature? It is nothing but the diſpoſition of

bodies to reflect the rays of a certain order, and to abſorb all the reſt.

What then is this ſecret diſpoſition? Sir Iſaac Newton demonſtrates that it is nothing more than the denſity of the ſmall conſtituent particles of which a body is compoſed. And how is this reflexion performed? It was ſuppoſed to ariſe from the rebounding of the rays, in the ſame manner as a ball on the ſurface of a ſolid body; but this is a miſtake; for Sir Iſaac taught the aſtoniſhed philoſophers, that bodies are opake for no other reaſon, but becauſe their pores are large; and that light reflects on our eyes from the very boſom of thoſe pores; that the ſmaller the pores of a body are, the more ſuch a body is tranſparent. Thus paper, which reflects the light when dry, tranſmits it when oiled, becauſe the oil, by filling its pores, makes them much ſmaller.

It is there that examining the vaſt poroſity of bodies, every particle having its pores, and every particle of thoſe particles having its own, he ſhews we are not certain that there is a cubic inch of ſolid matter in the univerſe, ſo far are we from conceiving what matter is. Having thus divided, as it were, light into its elements, and carried the ſagacity of his diſcoveries ſo far, as to prove the method of diſtinguiſhing compound colours from ſuch as are primitive; he ſhews, that theſe elementary rays ſeparated by the priſm are ranged in their

order for no other reaſon but becauſe they are refracted in that very order; and it is this property (unknown till he diſcovered it) of breaking or ſplitting in this proportion; it is this unequal refraction of rays, this power of refracting the red leſs than the orange colour, *etc.* which he calls the different refrangibility. The moſt reflexible rays are the moſt refrangible, and from hence he evinces that the ſame power is the cauſe both of the reflection and refraction of light.

But all theſe wonders are merely but the opening of his diſcoveries. He found out the ſecret to ſee the vibrations or fits of light, which come and go inceſſantly, and which either tranſmit light, or reflect it according to the denſity of the parts they meet with. He has preſumed to calculate the denſity of the particles of air neceſſary between two glaſſes, the one flat, the other convex on one ſide, ſet one upon the other; in order to operate ſuch a tranſmiſſion or reflection, or to form ſuch and ſuch a colour.

From all theſe combinations he diſcovers the proportion in which light acts on bodies, and bodies act on light.

He ſaw light ſo perfectly, that he has determined to what degree of perfection the art of increaſing it, and of aſſiſting our eyes by teleſcopes can be carried.

Des Cartes, from a noble confidence, that

was very excuſable, conſidering how ſtrongly he was fired at the firſt diſcoveries he made in an art which he almoſt firſt found out; Des Cartes, I ſay, hoped to diſcover in the ſtars, by the aſſiſtance of teleſcopes, objects as ſmall as thoſe we diſcern upon the earth.

But Sir Iſaac Newton has ſhewn, that dioptric teleſcopes cannot be brought to a greater perfection; becauſe of that refraction, and of that very refrangibility, which at the ſame time that they bring objects nearer to us, ſcatter too much the elementary rays; he has calculated in theſe glaſſes the proportion of the ſcattering of the red and of the blue rays; and proceeding ſo far as to demonſtrate things which were not ſuppoſed even to exiſt, he examines the inequalities which ariſe from the ſhape or figure of the glaſs, and that which ariſes from the refrangibility. He finds, that the object glaſs of the teleſcope being convex on one ſide, and flat on the other, in caſe that flat ſide be turned towards the object, the error which ariſes from the conſtruction and poſition of the glaſs is above five thouſand times leſs than the error which ariſes from the refrangibility; and therefore that the ſhape or figure of the glaſſes is not the cauſe why teleſcopes cannot be carried to a greater perfection, but ariſes wholly from the nature of light.

For this reaſon he invented a teleſcope,

which discovers objects by reflexion and not by refraction. Telescopes of this new kind are very hard to make, and their use is not easy. But according to the English, a reflective telescope of but five feet has the same effect as another of an hundred feet in length.

LETTER XVII.

OF INFINITES IN GEOMETRY, AND SIR ISAAC NEWTON's CHRONOLOGY.

THE labyrinth and abyſs of infinity is alſo a new courſe Sir Iſaac Newton has gone through, and we are obliged to him for the clue, by whoſe aſſiſtance we are enabled to trace its various windings.

Des Cartes got the ſtart of him alſo in this aſtoniſhing invention. He advanced with mighty ſteps in his geometry, and was arrived at the very borders of infinity, but went no farther. Dr. Wallis, about the middle of the laſt century, was the firſt that reduced a fraction by a perpetual diviſion to an infinite ſeries.

The lord Brounker employed this ſeries to ſquare the hyperbola.

Mercator publiſhed a demonſtration of this quadrature, much about which time, Sir Iſaac Newton being then twenty three years of age, had invented a general method to perform, on all geometrical curves, what had juſt before been tried on the hyperbola.

It is to this method of ſubjecting every

where infinity to algebraical calculations, that the name is given of differential calculations or of fluxions, and integrial calculation. It is the art of numbering and measuring exactly a thing whose existence cannot be conceived.

And, indeed, would you not imagine that a man laughed at you, who should declare that there are lines infinitely great which form an angle infinitely little?

That a right line, which is a right line so long as it is finite, by changing infinitely little its direction, becomes an infinite curve, and that a curve may become infinitely less than another curve?

That there are infinite squares, infinite cubes, and infinites of infinites all greater than one another, and the last but one of which, is nothing in comparison of the last?

All these things, which at first appear to be the utmost excess of frenzy, are in reality an effort of the subtilty and extent of the human mind, and the art of finding truths which till then had been unknown.

This so bold edifice is even founded on simple ideas. The business is to measure the diagonal of a square, to give the area of a curve, to find the square root of a number, which has none in common arithmetic. After all, the imagination ought not to be startled any more at so many orders of infinites, than at the so well known proposition, viz. That curve lines

may always be made to paſs between a circ
and a tangent; or at that other, namely, th
matter is diviſible in infinitum. Theſe two truth
have been demonſtrated many years, and ar
no leſs incomprehenſible than the things w
have been ſpeaking of.

For many years the invention of this famou
calculation was denied Sir Iſaac Newton. I
Germany Mr. Leibnitz was conſidered as th
inventor of the differences or moments, calle
† Fluxions, and Mr. Bernouilli claimed the in
tegral calculation. However, Sir Iſaac is no
thought to have firſt made the diſcovery, an
the other two have the glory of having onc
made the world doubt whether it was to be a
cribed to him or them. Thus ſome conteſte
with Dr. Harvey the invention of the circulati
on of the blood, as others diſputed with M
Perrault that of the circulation of the ſap.

Hartſocher and Lewenhoeck diſputed with
each other the honour of having firſt ſeen th
vermiculi of which mankind are formed. This
Hartſocher alſo conteſted with Huygens the
invention of a new method of calculating the
diſtance of a fixed ſtar. It is not yet known
to what philoſopher we owe the invention o
the cycloid. Be this as it will, it is by the help
of this geometry of infinites that Sir Iſaac
Newton attained to the moſt ſublime diſcove
ries.

† By Sir Iſaac Newton.

I am now to ſpeak of another work, which, ough more adapted to the capacity of the hu- n mind, does nevertheleſs diſplay ſome marks that creative genius with which Sir Iſaac ewton was informed in all his reſearches. he work I mean is a chronology of a new nd; for what province ſoever he undertook, was ſure to change the ideas and opinions ceived by the reſt of men.

Accuſtomed to unravel and diſintangle cha- s, he was reſolved to convey at leaſt ſome ght into that of the fables of antiquity, which e blended and confounded with hiſtory, and an uncertain chronology. It is true, that ere is no family, city or nation, but endea- ours to remove its original as far backward as ſſible. Beſides, the firſt hiſtorians were the oſt negligent in ſetting down the aeras; books ere infinitely leſs common than they are at is time, and conſequently authors being not obnoxious to cenſure, they therefore impo- upon the world with greater impunity; and it is evident that theſe have related a great mber of fictitious particulars, it is probable ough that they alſo gave us ſeveral falſe ae- s.

It appeared in general to Sir Iſaac, that the orld was five hundred years younger than ronologers declare it to be. He grounds his inion on the ordinary courſe of nature, and on e obſervations which aſtronomers have made.

By the courſe of nature we here underſta
the time that every generation of men lives u
on the earth. The Egyptians firſt employ
this vague and uncertain method of calculatin
when they began to write the beginning of the
hiſtory. Theſe computed three hundred a
forty one generations from Menes to Sethon
and having no fixed aera, they ſuppoſed thr
generations to conſiſt of an hundred years. I
this manner they computed eleven thouſan
three hundred and forty years from Mene
reign to that of Sethon.

The Greeks, before they counted by olym
piads, followed the method of the Egyptian
and even gave a little more extent to generat
ons, making each to conſiſt of forty years.

Now here both the Egyptians and th
Greeks made an erroneous computation. It
true indeed, that according to the uſual cour
of nature three generations laſt about an hun
dred and twenty years: but three reigns are fa
from taking up ſo many. It is very eviden
that mankind in general live longer than king
are found to reign; ſo that an author wh
ſhould write a hiſtory, in which there weren
dates fixed, and ſhould know that nine kings ha
reigned over a nation; ſuch an hiſtorian woul
commit a great error ſhould he allow thre
hundred years to theſe nine monarchs. Ever
generation takes about thirty ſix years; ever
reign is, one with the other, about twenty

Thirty kings of England have ſwayed the ſceptre from William the conqueror to George the firſt, the years of whoſe reigns added together, amount to ſix hundred and forty eight years; which being divided equally among the thirty kings, give to every one a reign of twenty one years and a half very near. Sixty three kings of France have ſat upon the throne; theſe have, one with another, reigned about twenty years each. This is the uſual courſe of nature: the antients therefore were miſtaken, when they ſuppoſed the durations, in general, of reigns, to equal that of generations. They therefore allowed too great a number of years, and conſequently ſome years muſt be ſubtracted from their computation.

Aſtronomical obſervations ſeem to have lent a ſtill greater aſſiſtance to our philoſopher. He appears to us ſtronger when he fights upon his own ground.

You know that the earth, beſides its annual motion which carries it round the ſun, from weſt to eaſt, in the ſpace of a year, has alſo a ſingular revolution, which was quite unknown till within theſe late years. Its poles have a very ſlow retrograde motion from eaſt to weſt, whence it happens that their poſition every day does not correſpond exactly with the ſame point of the heavens. This difference, which is ſo inſenſible in a year, becomes pretty conſiderable in time; and in threeſcore and twelve

years the difference is found to be of one degree; that is to ſay, the three hundred and ſixtieth part of the circumference of the whole heaven. Thus after ſeventy two years, the colure of the vernal equinox, which paſſed through a fixed ſtar, correſponds with another fixed ſtar. Hence it is, that the ſun, inſtead of being in that part of the heavens in which the Ram was ſituated in the time of Hipparchus, is found to correſpond with that part of the heavens in which the Bull was ſituated; and the Twins are placed where the Bull then ſtood. All the ſigns have changed their ſituation, and yet we ſtill retain the ſame manner of ſpeaking as the antients did. In this age we ſay that the ſun is in the Ram in the ſpring, from the ſame principle of condeſcenſion that we ſay that the ſun turns round.

Hipparchus was the firſt among the Greeks who obſerved ſome change in the conſtellations, with regard to the equinoxes, or rather who learnt it from the Egyptians. Philoſophers aſcribed this motion to the ſtars; for in thoſe ages people were far from imagining ſuch a revolution in the earth, which was ſuppoſed to be immoveable in every reſpect. They therefore created a heaven in which they fixed the ſeveral ſtars, and gave this heaven a particular motion by which it was carried towards the eaſt, whilſt that all the ſtars ſeemed to perform their diurnal revolution from eaſt to weſt. To

this error they added a ſecond of much greater conſequence, by imagining that the pretended heaven of the fixed ſtars advanced one degree eaſtward every hundred years. In this manner they were nô leſs miſtaken in their aſtronomical calculation than in their ſyſtem of natural philoſophy. As for inſtance, an aſtronomer in that age would have ſaid, that the vernal equinox was in the time of ſuch and ſuch an obſervation, in ſuch a ſign, and in ſuch a ſtar. It has advanced two degrees of each ſince the time that obſervation was made to the preſent. Now two degrees are equivalent to two hundred years; conſequently the aſtronomer who made that obſervation lived juſt ſo many years before me. It is certain that an aſtronomer who had argued in this manner would have miſtook juſt fifty four years; hence it is that the ancients, who were doubly deceived, made their great year of the world, that is, the revolution of the whole heavens, to conſiſt of thirty ſix thouſand years. But the moderns are ſenſible, that this imaginary revolution of the heaven of the ſtars is nothing elſe than the revolution of the poles of the earth, which is performed in twenty five thouſand nine hundred years. It may be proper to obſerve tranſiently in this place, that Sir Iſaac, by determining the figure of the earth, has very happily explained the cauſe of this revolution.

All this being laid down, the only thing re-

maining to ſettle chronology, is, to ſee through what ſtar the colure of the equinoxes paſſes, and where it interſects at this time the ecliptic in the ſpring; and to diſcover whether ſome ancient writer does not tell us in what point the ecliptic was interſected in his time by the ſame colure of the equinoxes.

Clemens Alexandrinus informs us, that Chiron, who went with the Argonauts, obſerved the conſtellations at the time of that famous expedition, and fixed the vernal equinox to the middle of the Ram; the autumnal equinox to the middle of Libra; our ſummer ſolſtice to the middle of Cancer, and our winter ſolſtice, to the middle of Capricorn.

A long time after the expedition of the Argonauts, and a year before the Peloponneſian war, Methon obſerved that the point of the ſummer ſolſtice paſſed through the eighth degree of Cancer.

Now every ſign of the zodiac contains thirty degrees. In Chiron's time, the ſolſtice was arrived at the middle of the ſign, that is to ſay, to the fifteenth degree. A year before the Peloponneſian war, it was at the eighth, and therefore it had retarded ſeven degrees. A degree is equivalent to ſeventy two years; conſequently, from the beginning of the Peloponneſian war to the expedition of the Argonauts, there is no more than an interval of ſeven times ſeventy two years, which make five

hundred and four years, and not ſeven hundred years, as the Greeks computed. Thus in comparing the poſition of the heavens at that time with their poſition in that age, we find that the expedition of the Argonauts ought to be placed about nine hundred years before Chriſt, and not about fourteen hundred; and conſequently that the world is not ſo old by five hundred years as it was generally ſuppoſed to be. By this calculation all the æras are drawn nearer, and the ſeveral events are found to have happened later than is computed. I do not know whether this ingenious ſyſtem will be favourably received; and whether theſe notions will prevail ſo far with the learned, as to prompt them to reform the chronology of the world. Perhaps theſe gentlemen would think it too great a condeſcenſion, to allow one and the ſame man the glory of having improved natural philoſophy, geometry and hiſtory. This would be a kind of univerſal monarchy, which the principle of ſelf-love that is in man will ſcarce ſuffer him to indulge his fellow creature; and, indeed, at the ſame time that ſome very great philoſophers attacked Sir Iſaac Newton's attractive principle, others fell upon his chronological ſyſtem. Time, that ſhould diſcover to which of theſe the victory is due, may perhaps only leave the diſpute ſtill more undetermined.

LETTER XVIII.

OF TRAGEDY.

THE Engliſh, as well as the Spaniards were poſſeſſed of theatres at a time when the French had no more than moving, itinerant ſtages. Shakeſpeare, who was conſidered as the Cornielle of the firſt mentioned nation, was pretty near contemporary with Lopez de Vega, and he created, as it were, the Engliſh theatre. Shakeſpeare boaſted a ſtrong, fruitful genius: he was natural and ſublime, but had not ſo much as a ſingle ſpark of good taſte, or knew one rule of the drama. I will now hazard a random, but, at the ſame time, true reflection, which is, that the great merit of this dramatic poet has been the ruin of the Engliſh ſtage. There are ſuch beautiful, ſuch noble, ſuch dreadful ſcenes in this writer's monſtrous farces, to which the name of tragedy is given, that they have always been exhibited with great ſucceſs. Time, which only gives reputation to writers, at laſt makes their very faults venerable. Moſt of the whimſical, gigantic images of this poet, have through

length of time (it being an hundred and fifty years ſince they were firſt drawn) acquired a right of paſſing for ſublime. Moſt of the modern dramatic writers have copied him; but the touches and deſcriptions which are applauded in Shakeſpeare, are hiſſed at in theſe writers; and you will eaſily believe, that the veneration in which this author is held increaſes in proportion to the contempt which is ſhewn to the moderns. Dramatic writers do not conſider that they ſhould not imitate him; and the ill ſucceſs of Shakeſpeare's imitators produces no other effect than to make him be conſidered as inimitable. You remember, that in the tragedy of Othello Moor of Venice, (a moſt tender piece) a man ſtrangles his wife on the ſtage; and that the poor woman, whilſt ſhe is ſtrangling, cries aloud, that ſhe dies very unjuſtly. You know that in Hamlet Prince of Denmark, two grave-diggers make a grave, and are all the time drinking, ſinging ballads, and making humorous reflections, (natural indeed enough to perſons of their profeſſion) on the ſeveral ſkulls they throw up with their ſpades; but a circumſtance which will ſurprize you is, that this ridiculous incident has been imitated. In the reign of king Charles II. which was that of politeneſs, and the golden age of the liberal arts, Otway, in his Venice Preſerv'd, introduces Antonio the ſenator, and Naki his courtezan, in the midſt of the horrors of the

marquis of Bedmar's conſpiracy. Antonio, the ſuperannuated ſenator plays, in his miſtreſs's preſence, all the apiſh tricks of a lewd, impotent debauchee, who is quite frantic and out of his ſenſes. He mimics a bull and a dog; and bites his miſtreſs's legs, who kicks and whips him. However, the players have ſtruck theſe buffooneries (which indeed was calculated for the dregs of the people) out of Otway's tragedy; but they have ſtill left in Shakeſpeare's Julius Cæſar, the jokes of the Roman ſhoemakers and coblers, who are introduced in the ſame ſcene with Brutus and Caſſius. You will undoubtedly complain, that thoſe who have hitherto diſcourſed with you on the Engliſh ſtage, and eſpecially on the celebrated Shakeſpeare, have taken notice only of his errors; and that no one has tranſlated any of thoſe ſtrong, thoſe forcible paſſages which attone for all his faults. But to this I will anſwer, that nothing is eaſier than to exhibit in proſe all the ſilly impertinencies which a poet may have thrown out; but that it is a very difficult taſk to tranſlate his fine verſes All your junior academical Sophs, who ſet up for cenſors of the eminent writers, compile whole volumes; but methinks two pages which diſplay ſome of the beauties of great geniuſes are of infinitely more value than all the idle rhapſodies of thoſe commentators; and I will join in opinion with all perſons of good taſte, in declaring, that greater advantage

may be reaped from a dozen verſes of Homer or Virgil, than from all the critiques put together which have been made on thoſe two great poets.

I have ventured to tranſlate ſome paſſages of the moſt celebrated Engliſh poets, and ſhall now give you one from Shakeſpeare. Pardon the blemiſhes of the tranſlation for the ſake of the original; and remember always that when you ſee a verſion, you ſee merely a faint print of a beautiful picture. I have made choice of part of the celebrated ſoliloquy in Hamlet, which you may remember is as follows;

To be, or not to be? that is the queſtion.
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind, to ſuffer
The ſtings and arrows of outragious fortune,
Or to take arms againſt a ſea of troubles,
And by oppoſing, end them?—to die!—to ſleep!—
No more! and by a ſleep to ſay we end
The heart-ach, and the thouſand natural ſhocks
That fleſh is heir to! 'tis a conſummation
Devoutly to be wiſhed. To die!—to ſleep!——
To ſleep? perchance to dream! ay, there's the rub;
For in that ſleep of death, what dreams may come
When we have ſhuffled off this mortal coil,
Muſt give us pauſe. There's the reſpect
That makes calamity of ſo long life:
For who wou'd bear the whips and ſcorns of time,
Th' oppreſſor's wrong, the proud man's contumely,
The pangs of deſpis'd love, the law's delay,
The inſolence of office, and the ſpurns
That patient merit of th' unworthy takes,

When he himſelf might his quietus make
With a bare bodkin? who would fardles bear
To groan and ſweat under a weary life,
But that the dread of ſomething after death,
That undiſcovered country, from whoſe bourne
No traveller returns, puzzles the will,
And makes us rather bear thoſe ills we have,
Than fly to others that we know not of.
Thus conſcience does make cowards of us all;
And thus the native hue of reſolution
Is ſickled o'er with the pale caſt of thought:
And enterprizes of great weight and moment
With this regard their currents turn away,
And loſe the name of action——

My verſion of it runs thus:

Demeure, il faut choiſir et paſſer a l'inſtant
De la vie, a la mort, ou de l'etre au neant.
Dieux cruels, s'il en eſt, eclairez mon courage.
Faut il vieillir courbe ſous le main qui m'outrage,
Supporter, ou finir mon malheur et mon fort?
Qui ſuis je? qui m'arrote! et qu'eſtce que la mort?
C'eſt la fin de nos maux, c'eſt mon unique azile
Apres de long tranſports, c'eſt un ſommeil tranquile.
On s'endort, et tout meurt, mais un affreux reveil
Doit ſucceder peut etre aux douceurs du ſommeil!
On nous menace, on dit que cette courte vie
De tourmens eternels eſt auſſi tot ſuivie.
O mort! moment fatal? affreuſe eternitie!
Tout coeur a ton ſeul nom ſe glace epouvante.
Eh! qui pourroit ſans Toi ſupporter cette vie,
Ramper ſous un miniſtre, adorer ſes hauteurs;
Et montrer les langueurs de ſon ame abattue,
Ades amis ingrats qui detournent la vue?
La mort ſeroit trop douce en ces extremitez,
Mais le ſcrupule parle, et nous crie arretez;

Il defend a nos mains cet heureux homicide
Et d'un heros guerrier, fait un chretien timide, etc.

Do not imagine that I have tranſlated Shakeſpeare in a ſervile manner. Woe to the writer who gives a literal verſion; who by rendering every word of his original, by that very means enervates the ſenſe, and extinguiſhes all the fire of it. It is on ſuch an occaſion one may juſtly affirm, that the letter kills, but the ſpirit quickens.

Here follows another paſſage copied from a celebrated tragic writer among the Engliſh It is Dryden, a poet in the reign of Charles the ſecond; a writer whoſe genius was too exuberant, and not accompanied with judgment enough. Had he writ only a tenth part of the works he left behind him, his character would have been conſpicuous in every part; but his great fault is his having endeavoured to be univerſal.

The paſſage in queſtion is as follows:

When I conſider life, 'tis all a cheat;
Yet fool'd by hope, men favour the deceit;
Truſt on and think, to-morrow will repay;
To morrow's faiſer than the former day;
Lies more; and whilſt it ſays we ſhall be bleſt
With ſome new joy, cuts off what we poſſeſt;
Strange cozenage! none would live paſt years again,
Yet all hope pleaſure in what yet remain,
And from the dregs of life think to receive
What the firſt ſprightly running could not give.

I'm tir'd with waiting for this chymic gold,
Which fools us young, and beggars us when old.

I ſhall now give my traſlation.

De deſſeins en regrets et d'erreurs en deſirs.
Les Mortels inſenſes prominent lur folie.
Dans des malheurs preſents, dans l'eſpoir des plaiſirs
Nous ne vivons jamais, nous attendons la vie.
Demain, demain, dot on, va combler tous nos voeux.
Demain-vient, et nous laiſſe encore plus malheureux.
Qu'elle eſt l'erreur, helas! du ſoin qui nous devore,
Nul de nous ne voudroit recommencer ſon cours.
De nos premiers momens nous maudiſſons l'aurore,
Et de la nuit qui vient, nous attendons encore
Ce qu'ont en vain promis les plus beaux de nos jours,
etc.

It is in theſe detached paſſages that the Engliſh have hitherto excelled. Their dramatic pieces, moſt of which are barbarous and without decorum, order, or verſimilitude, dart ſuch reſplendent flaſhes thro' this gleam, as amaze and aſtoniſh us. The ſtyle is too much inflated, too unnatural, too cloſely copied from the Hebrew writers, who abound ſo much with the Aſiatic fuſtian. But then it muſt be alſo confeſſed, that the *ſtilts* of the figurative ſtyle on which the Engliſh tongue is lifted up, raiſes the genius at the ſame time very far aloft, though with an irregular pace. The firſt Engliſh writer who compoſed a regular Tragedy, and infuſed a ſpirit of elegance through every part of it, was the illuſtrious Mr. Addi-

ſon. His Cato is a maſter-piece both with regard to the diction, and to the beauty and harmony of the numbers. The character of Cato is, in my opinion, vaſtly ſuperior to that of Cornelia in the Pompey of Corneille: for Cato is great without any thing like fuſtian, and Cornelia, who beſides is not a neceſſary character, tends ſometimes to bombaſt. Mr. Addiſon's Cato appears to me to be the greateſt character that ever was brought upon any ſtage, but then the reſt of them do not correſpond to the dignity of it: and this dramatic piece ſo excellently well writ is disfigured by a dull love-plot, which ſpreads a certain languor over the whole, that quite murders it.

The cuſtom of introducing love at random and at any rate in the drama, paſſed from Paris to London about 1660, with our ribbons and our perukes. The ladies who adorn the theatrical circle there, in like manner as in the city, will ſuffer love only to be the theme of every converſation. The judicious Mr. Addiſon had the effeminate complaiſance to ſoften the ſeverity of his dramatic character ſo, as to adapt it to the manners of the age; and from an endeavour to pleaſe, quite ruined a maſter-piece in its kind. Since his time, the drama is become more regular, the audience more difficult to be pleaſed, and writers more correct, and leſs bold. I have ſeen ſome new pieces that were written with great regularity, but

which at the ſame time were very flat and inſipid. One would think that the Engliſh had been hitherto formed to produce irregular beauties only. The ſhining monſters of Shakeſpeare give infinitely more delight than the judicious images of the moderns. Hitherto the poetical genius of the Engliſh reſembles a tufted tree planted by the hand of nature, that throws out a thouſand branches at random, and ſpreads unequally, but with great vigour. It dies if you attempt to force its nature, and to lop and dreſs it in the ſame manner as the trees of the garden of Marli.

LETTER XIX.

OF COMEDY.

I Am ſurprized that the judicious and ingenious Mr. de Muralt, who has publiſhed ſome letters on the Engliſh and French nations, ſhould have confined himſelf, in treating of comedy, merely to cenſure Shadwell the comic writer. This author was had in pretty great contempt in Mr. de Muralt's time, and was not the poet of the polite part of the nation. His dramatic pieces, which pleaſed ſome time in acting, were deſpiſed by all perſons of taſte, and might be compared to many plays which I have ſeen in France, that drew crouds to the play-houſe, at the ſame time that they were intolerable to read; and of which it might be ſaid, that the whole city of Paris exploded them, and yet all flocked to ſee them repreſented on the ſtage. Methinks Mr. de Muralt ſhould have mentioned an excellent comic writer (living when he was in England) I mean Mr. Wycherley, who was a long time known publicly to be happy in the good graces of the moſt celebrated miſtreſs of King Charles the ſecond. This gentleman, who paſſed his life among perſons of the higheſt diſtinction, was perfectly

well acquainted with their lives and their follies, and painted them with the ſtrongeſt pencil, and in the trueſt colours. He has drawn a Miſanthrope or man-hater, in imitation of that of Moliere. All Wycherley's ſtrokes are ſtronger and bolder than thoſe of our Miſanthrope, but then they are leſs delicate, and the rules of decorum are not ſo well obſerved in this play. The Engliſh writer has corrected the only defect that is in Moliere's comedy, the thinneſs of the plot, which alſo is ſo diſpoſed that the characters in it do not enough raiſe our concern. The Engliſh comedy affects us, and the contrivance of the plot is very ingenious, but at the ſame time too bold for the French manners. The plot is this.-----A captain of a man of war, who is very brave, open-hearted, and enflamed with a ſpirit of contempt for all mankind, has a prudent ſincere friend whom he yet is ſuſpicious of, and a miſtreſs that loves him with the utmoſt exceſs of paſſion. The captain, ſo far from returning her love, will not even condeſcend to look upon her; but confides entirely in a falſe friend, who is the moſt worthleſs wretch living. At the ſame time he has given his heart to a creature who is the greateſt coquet and the moſt perfidious of her ſex, and is ſo credulous as to be confident ſhe is a Penelope, and his falſe friend a Cato. He embarks on board his ſhip in order to go and fight the Dutch, having left

all his money, his jewels and every thing he had in the world to this virtuous creature, whom at the ſame time he recommends to the care of his ſuppoſed faithful friend. Nevertheleſs the real man of honour, whom he ſuſpects ſo unaccountably, goes on board the ſhip with him; and the miſtreſs, on whom he would not beſtow ſo much as one glance, diſguiſes herſelf in the habit of a page, and is with him the whole voyage, without his once knowing that ſhe is of a ſex different from that ſhe attempts to paſs for, which, by the way, is not over natural.

The captain, having blown up his own ſhip in an engagement, returns to England abandoned and undone, accompanied by his page and his friend, without knowing the friendſhip of the one, or the tender paſſion of the other. Immediately he goes to the jewel among women, who he expected had preſerved her fidelity to him, and the treaſure he had left in her hands. He meets with her indeed, but married to the honeſt knave in whom he had repoſed ſo much confidence; and finds ſhe had acted as treacherouſly with regard to the caſket he had entruſted her with. The captain can ſcarce think it poſſible that a woman of virtue and honour can act ſo vile a part; but to convince him ſtill more of the reality of it, this very worthy lady falls in love with the little page, and will force him to her embraces.

But as it is requiſite juſtice ſhould be done, and that in a dramatic piece virtue ought to be rewarded and vice puniſhed; it is at laſt found that the captain takes his page's place. and lies with his faithleſs miſtreſs, cuckolds his treacherous friend, thruſts his ſword through his body, recovers his caſket and marries his page. You will obſerve that this play is alſo larded with a petulent, litigious old woman (a relation of the captain) who is the moſt comical character that was ever brought upon the ſtage.

Wycherley has alſo copied from Moliere another play, of as ſingular and bold a caſt, which is a kind of *Ecole des Femmes*, or, *School for married Women.*

The principal character in this comedy is one Horner, a ſly fortune-hunter, and the terror of all the city husbands. This fellow, in order to play a ſurer game, cauſes a report to be ſpread, that in his laſt illneſs, the ſurgeons had found it neceſſary to have him made an eunuch. Upon his appearing in this noble character, all the husbands in town flocked to him with their wives, and now poor Horner is only puzzled about his choice. However, he gives the preference to a little female peaſant, a very harmleſs, innocent creature, who enjoys a fine fluſh of health, and cuckolds her husband with a ſimplicity that has infinitely more merit than the witty malice of the moſt experienced ladies. This play cannot indeed

be called the ſchool of good morals, but it is certainly the ſchool of wit and true humour.

Sir John Vanbrugh has writ ſeveral comedies which are more humourous than thoſe of Mr. Wycherley, but not ſo ingenious. Sir John was a man of pleaſure, and likewiſe a poet and an architect. The general opinion is, that he is as ſprightly in his writings as he is heavy in his buildings. It is he who raiſed the famous caſtle of Blenheim, a ponderous and laſting monument of our unfortunate battle of Hockſtet. Were the apartments but as ſpacious as the walls are thick, this caſtle would be commodious enough. Some wag in an epitaph he made on Sir John Vanbrugh, has theſe lines;

Lie heavy on him earth, for he
Laid many a heavy load on thee.

Sir John having taken a tour into France before the glorious war that broke out in 1701, was thrown into the Baſtile, and detained there for ſome time, without being ever able to diſcover the motive which had prompted our miniſtry to indulge him this mark of their diſtinction. He writ a comedy during his confinement; and a circumſtance which appears to me very extraordinary, is, that we do not meet with a ſingle ſatirical ſtroke againſt the country in which he had been ſo injuriouſly treated.

The late Mr. Congreve raiſed the glory o comedy to a greater height than any Engliſ writer before or ſince his time. He wrote on ly a few plays, but they are all excellent i their kind. The laws of the drama are ſtri ly obſerved in them; they abound with cha racters, all which are ſhadowed with the u moſt delicacy, and we do not meet with much as one low or coarſe jeſt. The languag is every where that of men of honour, bu their actions are thoſe of knaves; a proof tha he was perfectly well acquainted with huma nature, and frequented what we call polit company. He was infirm, and come to th verge of life when I knew him. Mr. Congrev had one defect, which was, his entertaining to mean an idea of his firſt profeſſion (that of writer) though it was to this he owed his fam and fortune. He ſpoke of his works as o trifles that were beneath him; and hinted t me, in our firſt converſation, that I ſhould vi ſit him upon no other foot than that of a gen tleman, who led a life of plainneſs and ſimpli city. I anſwered, that had he been ſo unfor tunate as to be a mere gentleman I ſhould ne ver have come to ſee him; and I was ver much diſguſted at ſo unſeaſonable a piece o vanity.

Mr. Congreve's comedies are the moſt witt and regular, thoſe of Sir John Vanbrugh mo gay and humorous, and thoſe of Mr. Wyche

ley have the greateſt force and ſpirit. It may be proper to obſerve, that theſe fine geniuſes never ſpoke diſadvantageouſly of Moliere; and that none but the contemptible writers among the Engliſh have endeavoured to leſſen the character of that great comic poet. Such Italian muſicians as deſpiſe Lully are themſelves perſons of no character or ability; but a Buononchini eſteems that great artiſt, and does juſtice to his merit.

The Engliſh have ſome other good comic writers living, ſuch as Sir Richard Steel, and Mr. Cibber, who is an excellent player, and alſo poet laureat; a title which, how ridiculous ſoever it may be thought, is yet worth a thouſand crowns a year (beſides ſome conſiderable privileges) to the perſon who enjoys it. Our illuſtrious Cornielle had not ſo much.

To conclude. Do not deſire me to deſcend to particulars with regard to theſe Engliſh comedies which I am ſo fond of applauding; nor to give you a ſingle ſmart ſaying, or humorous ſtroke from Wycherley or Congreve. We do not laugh in reading a tranſlation. If you have a mind to underſtand the Engliſh comedy, the only way to do this will be for you to go to England, to ſpend three years in London, to make yourſelf maſter of the Engliſh tongue, and to frequent the play-houſe every night. I receive but little pleaſure from the peruſal of Ariſtophanes and Plautus, and for this reaſon,

becauſe I am neither a Greek nor a Roman. The delicacy of the humour, the alluſion, the *a propos*, all theſe are loſt to a foreigner.

But it is different with reſpect to tragedy; this treating only of exalted paſſions and heroical follies, which the antiquated errors of fable or hiſtory have made ſacred. *Oedipus*, *Electra*, and ſuch like characters may, with as much propriety, be treated of by the Spaniards, the Engliſh, or us, as by the Greeks. But true comedy is the ſpeaking picture of the follies and ridiculous foibles of a nation; ſo that he only is able to judge of the painting, who is perfectly acquainted with the people it repreſents.

LETTER XX.

OF SUCH OF THE NOBILITY AS CULTIVATE THE BELLES LETTRES.

THERE once was a time in France when the polite arts were cultivated by persons of the higheſt rank in the ſtate. The courtiers particularly were converſant in them, though indolence, a taſte for trifles, and a paſſion for intrigue, were the divinities of the country. The court, methinks, at this time, ſeems to have given into a taſte quite oppoſite to that of polite literature, but perhaps the mode of thinking may be revived again in a little time. The French are of ſo flexible a diſpoſition, may be moulded into ſuch a variety of ſhapes, that the monarch needs but command, and he is immediately obeyed. The Engliſh generally think, and learning is had in greater honour among them than in our country, an advantage that reſults naturally from the form of their government. There are about eight hundred perſons in England who have a right to ſpeak in public, and to ſupport the intereſt of the kingdom; and near five or ſix

thouſand may, in their turns, aſpire to the ſame honour. The whole nation ſet themſelves up as judges over theſe, and every man has the liberty of publiſhing his thoughts with regard to public affairs; which ſhews that all the people in general are indiſpenſibly obliged to cultivate their underſtandings. In England the governments of Greece and Rome are the ſubject of every converſation, ſo that every man is under a neceſſity of peruſing ſuch authors as treat of them, how diſagreeable ſoever it may be to him; and this ſtudy leads naturally to that of polite literature. Mankind in general ſpeak well in their reſpective profeſſions. What is the reaſon why our magiſtrates, our lawyers, our phyſicians, and a great number of the clergy, are abler ſcholars, have a finer taſte and more wit, than perſons of all other profeſſions? The reaſon is, becauſe their condition of life requires a cultivated and enlightened mind, in the ſame manner as a merchant is obliged to be acquainted with his traffic. Not long ſince an Engliſh nobleman, who was very young, came to ſee me at Paris in his return from Italy. He had writ a poetical deſcription of that country, which, for delicacy and politeneſs, may vie with any thing we meet with in the earl of Rocheſter, or in our Chalieu, our Saraſin, or Chapelle. The tranſlation I have given of it is ſo inexpreſſive of the ſtrength and delicate humour of the original,

at I am obliged ſeriouſly to aſk pardon of the thor, and of all who underſtand Engliſh. lowever, as this is the only method I have to ake his lordſhip's verſes known, I ſhall here reſent you with them in our tongue.

Qu'ay je donc vu dans l'Italie?
Orgueil, Aſtuce, et Pauvrete,
Grands Complimens, peu de Bonte
Et beaucoup de ceremonie.

L'extravagante Comedie
Que ſouvent l'Inquiſition †
Veut qu'on nomme Religion;
Mais qu'ici nous nommons Folie.

La Nature en vain bienfaiſante
Veut enricher ſes Lieux charmans,
Des Pretres la main deſolante
Etouffe ſes plus beaux preſens.

Les Monſignors, ſoy diſant Grands,
Seuls dans leurs Palais magnifiques
Y ſont d'illuſtres faineants,
Sans argent, et ſans domeſtiques.

Pour les Petits, ſans liberte,
Martyrs du joug qui les domine,
Ils ont fait voeu de pouvrete,
Priant Dieu par oiſivete
Et toujours jeunante par famine.

Ces beux lieux du Pape benis
Semblent habitez par les Diables;
Et les Habitants miſerables
Sont damnez dans le Paradis.

† *His lordſhip undoubtedly hints at the farces which main preachers act in the open ſquares.*

LETTER XXI.

OF THE EARL OF ROCHESTER AND MR. WALLER.

THE earl of Rocheſter's name is univerſally known. Mr. de St. Evremont has made very frequent mention of him, but then he has repreſented this famous nobleman in no other light than as the man of pleaſure, as one who was the idol of the fair; but with regard to myſelf, I would willingly deſcribe in him the man of genius, the great poet. Among other pieces which diſplay the ſhining imagination his lordſhip only could boaſt, he wrote ſome ſatyrs on the ſame ſubjects as thoſe our celebrated Boileau made choice of. I do not know any better method of improving the taſte, than to compare the productions of ſuch great geniuſes as have exerciſed their talent on the ſame ſubject. Boileau declaims as follows againſt human reaſon in his ſatire on man.

Cependant a la voir plein de vapeurs legeres,
Soi meme ſe bercer de ces propres chimeres,
Lui ſeul de la nature eſt la baze et l'appui,
Et le dixieme ciel ne tourne que pour lui.

De tous les Animaux il eſt ici le Maitre;
Qui pourroit le nier, pourſuis tu? Moi peutetre.
Ce maitre pretendu qui leur donne des loix,
Ce Roi des Animaux, combien a t'il de Rois?

Yet, pleas'd with idle whimſies of his brain,
And puff'd with pride, this haughty thing would fain
Be thought himſelf the only ſtay and prop
That holds the mighty frame of nature up.
The ſkies and ſtars his properties muſt ſeem,
— — — — — — — — — — —
Of all the creatures he's the Lord, he cries.
— — — — — — — — — — —
And who is there, ſay you, that dares deny
So own'd a truth? That may be, Sir, do I.
— — — — — — — — — — —
This boaſted monarch of the world who awes
The creatures here, and with his nod gives laws;
This ſelf-nam'd king, who this pretends to be
The lord of all, how many lords has he?

OLDHAM a little altered.

The lord Rocheſter expreſſes himſelf, in his ſatire againſt man, in pretty near the following manner; but I muſt firſt deſire you always to remember, that the verſions I give you from the Engliſh poets are written with freedom and latitude; and that the reſtraint of our verſification, and the delicacies of the French tongue, will not allow a tranſlator to convey into it the licentious impetuoſity and fire of the Engliſh numbers.

Cet Eſprit que je hais, cet Eſprit plein d'erreur.
Ce n'eſt pas ma raiſon, c'eſt la trienne Docteur.

C'eſt la raiſon frivole, inquiete, orgeuilleuſe
Des ſages Animaux, rivale dedagneuſe,
Qui croit entr'eux et l'Ange, occuper le milieu,
Et pence etre ici bas l'image de ſon Dieu.
Vil atome imparfait, qui croit, doute diſpute
Rampe, s'eleve, tombe, et nie encore ſa chute.
Qui nous dit je ſuis libre, et nous montrant ſes fers,
Et dont l'oeil trouble et faux, croit, percer l'univers.
Allez, reverends Fous, bienheureux Fanatiques,
Compilez bien l'Amas de vos Riens ſcholaſtiques,
Peres de Viſions, et d'Enigmes ſacrez,
Auteurs du Labirinthe, ou vous vous egarez.
Allez obſcurement eclaircir vos miſteres,
Et courez dans l'ecole adorer vos chimeres.
Il eſt d'autres erreurs, il eſt de ces devots
Condamne pour eaux memes a l'ennui du repos.
Ce myſtique encloitre fier de ſon indolence
Tranquille, au ſein de Dieu. Que peut il faire? Il penſe.
Non, tu ne penſes point, miſerable tu dors:
Inutile a la terre, et mis au rang des Morts.
Ton eſprit enerve croupit dans la Moleſſe.
Reveille toi, ſois homme, et ſors de ton Yvreſſe.
L'homme eſt ne pour agir, et tu pretens penſer? etc.

The original runs thus:

Hold, mighty man, I cry all this we know,
And 'tis this very reaſon I deſpiſe,
This ſupernatural gift, that makes a mite
Think he's the image of the infinite;
Comparing his ſhort life, void of all reſt,
To the eternal and the ever bleſt
This buſy, puzzling ſtirrer up of doubt,
That frames deep myſteries, then finds 'em out.
Filling, with frantic crouds of thinking fools,
Thoſe reverend bedlams, colleges and ſchools;
Born on whoſe wings, each heavy ſot can pierce
The limits of the boundleſs univerſe.

So charming ointments make an old witch fly,
And bear a crippled carcaſe through the ſky.
'Tis this exalted power, whoſe buſineſs lies
In nonſenſe and impoſſibilities.
This made a whimſical philoſopher,
Before the ſpacious world his tub prefer;
And we have modern cloiſter'd coxcombs, who
Retire to think 'cauſe they have nought to do:
But thoughts are giv'n for action's government,
Where action ceaſes, thought's impertinent.

Whether theſe ideas are true or falſe, it is certain they are expreſſed with an energy and fire which form the poet. I ſhall be very far from attempting to examine philoſophically into theſe verſes; to lay down the pencil and take up the rule and compaſs on this occaſion; my only deſign in this letter, being to diſplay the genius of the Engliſh poets, and therefore I ſhall continue in the ſame view.

The celebrated Mr. Waller has been very much talked of in France, and Mr. de la Fontaine, St. Evremont and Bayle, have written his Elogium, but ſtill his name only is known. He had much the ſame reputation in London as Voiture had in Paris, and in my opinion deſerved it better. Voiture was born in an age that was juſt emerging from barbarity; an age that was ſtill rude and ignorant, the people of which aimed at wit, though they had not the leaſt pretenſions to it, and ſought for points and conceits inſtead of ſentiments. Briſtol ſtones are more eaſily found than diamonds.

Voiture, born with an eaſy and frivolous genius, was the firſt who ſhone in this Aurora of French literature. Had he come into the world after thoſe great geniuſes who ſpread ſuch a glory over the age of Lewis the fourteenth, he would either have been unknown, would have been deſpiſed, or would have corrected his ſtile. Boileau applauded him, but it was in his firſt ſatires, at a time when the taſte of that great poet was not yet formed. He was young, and in an age when perſons form a judgment of men from their reputation, and not from their writings. Beſides, Boileau was very partial both in his encomiums and his cenſures. He applauded Segrais, whoſe works no body reads; he abuſed Quinault, whoſe poetical pieces every one has got by heart, and is wholly ſilent upon La Fontaine. Waller, tho' a better poet than Voiture, was not yet a finiſhed poet. The graces breathe in ſuch of Waller's works as are writ in a tender ſtrain, but then they are languid through negligence, and often disfigured with falſe thoughts. The Engliſh had not, in his time, attained the art of correct writing. But his ſerious compoſitions exhibit a ſtrength and vigour which could not have been expected from the ſoftneſs and effeminacy of his other pieces. He wrote an elegy on Oliver Cromwell, which, with all its faults, is neverthleſs looked upon as a maſterpiece. To underſtand this copy of verſes, you

are to know that the day Oliver died was remarkable for a great ſtorm. His poem begins in this manner:

Il n'eſt plus, s'en eſt fait ſoumettons nous au ſort,
Le ciel a ſignale ce jour par des tempetes,
Et la voix des tonnerres eclatant ſur nos tetes
Vient d'anoncer ſa mort.

Par ſes derniers ſoupris il ebranle cet ile;
Cet ile que ſon bras fit trembler tant de fois,
Quand dans le cours de ſes Exploits,
Il briſoit la tete des Rois,
Et ſoumettoit un peuple a ſon joug ſeul docile.
Mer tu t'en es trouble; O Mer tes flots emus
Semblent dire en grondant aux plus lointains rivages
Que l'effroi de la terre et ton Maitre n'eſt plus.

Tel au ciel autrefois s'envola Romulus,
Tel il quita la Terre, au milieu des orages,
Tel d'un peuple guerrier il recut les homages;
Obedi dans ſa vie, a ſa mort adore,
Son palais fut un temple, etc.

We muſt reſign! Heav'n his great ſoul does claim
In ſtorms as loud as his immortal fame;
His dying groans, his laſt breath ſhakes our iſle,
And trees uncut fall for his fun'ral pile:
About his palace their broad roots are toſt
Into the air; ſo Romulus was loſt;
New Rome in ſuch a tempeſt miſs'd her king,
And from obeying fell to worſhipping:
On Oeta's top thus Hercules lay dead,
With ruin'd oaks and pines about him ſpread.
Nature herſelf took notice of his death,
And, ſighing, ſwell'd the ſea with ſuch a breath,
That to remoteſt ſhores the billows roll'd,
Th' approaching fate of his great ruler told.

It was this elogium that gave occaſion to the reply (taken notice of in Bayle's dictionary,) which Waller made to king Charles the ſecond. This king, to whom Waller had a little before (as is uſual with bards and monarchs) preſented a copy of verſes embroidered with praiſes, reproached the poet for not writing with ſo much energy and fire as when he had applauded the uſurper (meaning Oliver;) *Sir*, replied Waller to the king, *we poets ſucceed better in fiction than in truth.* This anſwer was not ſo ſincere as that which a Dutch ambaſſador made, when the ſame monarch complained that his maſters paid leſs regard to him than they had done to Cromwell; *Ah, Sir!* ſays the ambaſſador, *Oliver was quite another man*-------It is not my intent to give a commentary on Waller's character, nor on that of any other perſon; for I conſider men after their death in no other light than as they were writers, and wholly diſregard every thing elſe. I ſhall only obſerve, that Waller, though born in a court, and to an eſtate of five or ſix thouſand pounds ſterling a year, was never ſo proud or ſo indolent as to lay aſide the happy talent which nature had indulged him. The earls of Dorſet and Roſcommon, the two dukes of Buckingham, the lord Halifax, and ſo many other noblemen, did not think the reputation they obtained of very great poets and illuſtrious writers, any way derogatory to their quality.

They are more glorious for their works than for their titles. Theſe cultivated the polite arts with as much aſſiduity, as though they had been their whole dependence. They alſo have made learning appear venerable in the eyes of the vulgar, who have need to be led in all things by the great, and who nevertheleſs faſhion their manners leſs after thoſe of the nobility (in England I mean) than in any other country in the world.

LETTER XXII.

OF MR. POPE, AND SOME OTHER FAMOUS POETS.

I Intended to treat of Mr. Prior, one of the moſt amiable Engliſh poets, whom you ſaw plenipotentiary and envoy extraordinary at Paris in 1712. I alſo deſigned to have given you ſome idea of the lord Roſcommon's and the lord Dorſet's muſe; but I find that to do this I ſhould be obliged to write a large volume, and that after much pains and trouble you would have but an imperfect idea of all thoſe works. Poetry is a kind of muſic in which a man ſhould have ſome knowlege, before he pretends to judge of it. When I give you a tranſlation of ſome paſſages from thoſe foreign poets, I only prick down, and that imperfectly, their muſic; but then I cannot expreſs the taſte of their harmony.

There is one Engliſh poem eſpecially, which I ſhould deſpair of ever making you underſtand, the title whereof is Hudibras. The ſubject of it is the civil war in the time of the grand rebellion; and the principles and practice of the Puritans are therein ridiculed. It

is Don Quixotte, it is our * Satyre Menippee, blended together. I never found ſo much wit in one ſingle book as in that, which at the ſame time is the moſt difficult to be tranſlated. Who would believe that a work which paints in ſuch lively and natural colours the ſeveral foibles and follies of mankind, and where we meet with more ſentiments than words, ſhould baffle the endeavours of the beſt tranſlator? but the reaſon of this is, almoſt every part of it alludes to particular incidents. The clergy are there made the principal object of ridicule, which is underſtood but by few among the laity. To explain this, a commentary would be neceſſary, and humour when explained is no longer humour. Whoever ſets up for a commentator of ſmart ſayings and repartees, is himſelf a blockhead. This is the reaſon why the works of the ingenious Dean Swift, who has been called the Engliſh Rabelais, will never be well underſtood in France. This gentleman has the honour (in common with Rabelais) of be-

* Species of ſatire in proſe and verſe, written in France in 1594, againſt the chiefs of the league at that time. This ſatire which is alſo called Catholicon d'Eſpagne, was looked upon as a maſter-piece. Rapin, Le Roy, Bithou, Paſſerat and Cretien, the greateſt wits of that age, are the authors of it; and it was entitled Menippe, from Menippus, a cynical philoſopher, who had written letters filled with ſharp, ſatyrical expreſſions, in imitation of Varro, who compoſed ſatyrs which he entitled Satyrae Menippeae.

ing a prieſt, and like him laughs at every thing. But in my humble opinion, the title of the Engliſh Rabelais, which is given the dean, is highly derogatory to his genius. The former has interſperſed his unaccountably fantaſtic and unintelligible book with the moſt gay ſtrokes of humour, but which at the ſame time has a greater proportion of impertinence. He has been vaſtly laviſh of erudition, of ſmut, and inſipid raillery. An agreeable tale of two pages is purchaſed at the expence of whole volumes of nonſenſe. There are but few perſons, and thoſe of a groteſque taſte, who pretend to underſtand, and to eſteem this work; for as to the reſt of the nation, they laugh at the pleaſant and diverting touches which are found in Rabelais, and deſpiſe his book. He is looked upon as the prince of buffoons. The readers are vexed to think that a man, who was maſter of ſo much wit, ſhould have made ſo wretched an uſe of it. He is an intoxicated philoſopher, who never writ but when he was in liquor.

Dean Swift is Rabelais in his ſenſes, and frequenting the politeſt company. The former indeed is not ſo gay as the latter, but then he poſſeſſes all the delicacy, the juſtneſs, the choice, the good taſte, in all which particulars our gigling rural vicar Rabelais is wanting. The poetical numbers of dean Swift are of a ſingular and almoſt inimitable taſte; true hu-

mour, whether in proſe or verſe, ſeems to be his peculiar talent; but whoever is deſirous of underſtanding him perfectly, muſt viſit the iſland in which he was born.

It will be much eaſier for you to form an idea of Mr. Pope's works. He is, in my opinion the moſt elegant, the moſt correct poet; and at the ſame time the moſt harmonious (a circumſtance which redounds very much to the honour of his muſe) that England ever gave birth to. He has mellowed the moſt harſh ſounds of the Engliſh trumpet to the ſoft accents of the flute. His compoſitions may be eaſily tranſlated, becauſe they are vaſtly clear and perſpicuous; beſides, moſt of his ſubjects are general, and relative to all nations.

His Eſſay on Criticiſm will ſoon be known in France, by the tranſlation which l'Abbe de Renel has made of it.

Here is an extract from his poem entitled the Rape of the Lock, which I juſt now tranſlated with the latitude I uſually take on ſuch occaſions; for once again, nothing can be more ridiculous than to tranſlate a poet literally.

Umbriel, a l'inſtant, vieil Gnome rechigne,
Va d'une aile peſante et d'un air renfrogne
Chercher en murmurant la caverne profonde,
Oux loin des doux raions que repand l'œil du monde
La Deeſſe aux vapeurs a choiſi ſon ſejour,
Les triſtes Aquilons y ſiflent a l'entour.

Et le ſouffle mal ſain de leur aride haleine
Y porte aux environs la fievre et la migriane.
Sur un riche ſofa derriere un paravent
Loin des flambeaux, de bruit, des parleurs et du vent,
La quinteuſe Deeſſe inceſſamment repoſe,
Le cœur gros de chagrin, ſans en ſavoir la cauſe.
N'aiant penſee jamais, l'eſprit toujours trouble,
L'œil charge, le teint pale, et l'hypocondre enfle.
La mediſante Envie, eſt aſſiſe aupres d'elle,
Vieil ſpectre feminin, decrepite pucelle,
Avec un air devot dechiraut ſon prochain,
Et chanſonnant les gens l'evangile a la main.
Sur un lit plein de fleurs negligemment panchee
Une jeune Beaute non loin d'elle eſt couchee,
C'eſt l'Affectation qui graſſaie en parlant,
Ecoute ſans entendre, et lorgne en regardant.
Qui rougit ſans pudeur, et rit de tout ſans joie,
De cent maux differens pretent qu'elle eſt la proie:
Et pleine de ſante ſous le rouge et la fard,
Se plaine avec moleſſe, et ſe pame avec art.

Umbriel, a duſky, melancholy ſprite
As ever ſullied the fair face of light,
Down to the central earth, his proper ſcene,
Repairs to ſearch the gloomy cave of Spleen.
Swift on his ſooty pinions flits the Gnome,
And in a vapour reach'd the diſmal dome.
No chearful breeze this ſullen region knows,
The dreaded eaſt is all the wind that blows.
Here, in a grotto, ſhelter'd cloſe from air,
And ſcreen'd in ſhades from day's deteſted glare,
She ſighs for ever on her penſive bed,
Pain at her ſide, and Megrim at her head,
Two handmaids wait the throne: alike in place,
But diff'ring far in figure and in face,
Here ſtood ill nature like an ancient maid,
Her wrinkled form in black and white array'd;

With ſtore of prayers for mornings, nights, and noons,
Her hand is fill'd; her boſom with lampoons.
There Affectation, with a ſickly mein,
Shows in her cheek the roſes of eighteen,
Practis'd to liſp, and hang the head aſide,
Faints into airs, and languiſhes with pride;
On the rich quilt ſinks with becoming woe,
Wrapt in a gown, for ſickneſs and for ſhow.

This extract in the original (not in the faint tranſlation I have give you of it) may be compared to the deſcription of La Moleſſe (ſoftneſs or effeminacy) in Boileau's Lutrin.

Methinks I now have given you ſpecimens enough from the Engliſh poets. I have made ſome tranſient mention of their philoſophers, but as for good hiſtorians among them I do not know of any; and indeed a Frenchman was forced to write their hiſtory. Poſſibly the Engliſh genius, which is either languid or impetuous, has not yet acquired that unaffected eloquence, that plain but majeſtic air, which hiſtory requires. Poſſibly too the ſpirit of party, which exhibits objects in a dim and confuſed light, may have ſunk the credit of their hiſtorians. One half of the nation is always at variance with the other half. I have met with people who aſſured me that the duke of Marlborough was a coward, and that Mr. Pope was a fool; juſt as ſome Jeſuits in France declare Paſcal to have been a man of little or no genius; and ſome Janſeniſts affirm father Bourdaloue to have been a mere babbler. The Ja-

cobites conſider Mary queen of Scots as a pious heroine, but thoſe of an oppoſite party look upon her as a proſtitute, an adultereſs, a murderer. Thus the Engliſh have memorials of the ſeveral reigns, but no ſuch thing as a hiſtory. There is indeed now living, one Mr. Gordon, (the public are obliged to him for a tranſlation of Tacitus) who is very capable of writing the hiſtory of his own country, but Rapin de Thoyras got the ſtart of him. To conclude, in my opinion the Engliſh have not ſuch good hiſtorians as the French, have no ſuch thing as a real tragedy, have ſeveral delightful comedies, ſome wonderful paſſages in certain of their poems, and boaſt of philoſophers that are worthy of inſtructing mankind. The Engliſh have reaped very great benefit from the writers of our nation, and therefore we ought, (ſince they have not ſcrupled to be in our debt) to borrow from them. Both the Engliſh and we came after the Italians, who have been our inſtructors in all the arts, and whom we have ſurpaſſed in ſome. I cannot determine which of the three nations ought to be honoured with the palm; but happy the writer who could diſplay their various merits.

LETTER XXIII.

OF THE REGARD THAT OUGHT TO BE SHEWN TO MEN OF LETTERS.

NEITHER the Engliſh, nor any other people, have foundations eſtabliſhed in favour of the polite arts like thoſe in France. There are univerſities in moſt countries, but it is in France only that we meet with ſo beneficial an encouragement for aſtronomy, and all parts of the mathematics, for phyſic, for reſearches into antiquity, for painting, ſculpture and architecture. Lewis the fourteenth has immortalized his name by theſe ſeveral foundations, and this immortality did not coſt him two hundred thouſand livres a year.

I muſt confeſs, that one of the things I very much wonder at, is, that as the parliament of Great Britain have promiſed a reward of twenty thouſand pounds Sterling to any perſon who may diſcover the longitude, they ſhould never have once thought to imitate Lewis the fourteenth in his munificence with regard to the arts and ſciences.

Merit indeed meets in England with rewards of another kind, which redound more to the

honour of the nation. The Engliſh have ſo great a veneration for exalted talents, that a man of merit in their country is always ſure of making his fortune. Mr. Addiſon in France would have been elected a member of one of the academies, and, by the credit of ſome women, might have obtained a yearly penſion of twelve hundred livres; or elſe might have been impriſoned in the Baſtile, upon pretence that certain ſtrokes in his tragedy of Cato had been diſcovered, which glanced at the porter of ſome man in power. Mr. Addiſon was raiſed to the poſt of ſecretary of ſtate in England. Sir Iſaac Newton was made warden of the royal mint. Mr. Congreve had a conſiderable * employment. Mr. Prior was plenipotentiary. Dr. Swift is Dean of St. Patrick in Dublin, and is more revered in Ireland than the primate himſelf. The religion which Mr. Pope profeſſes excludes him indeed from preferments of every kind, but then it did not prevent his gaining two hundred thouſand livres by his excellent tranſlation of Homer. I myſelf ſaw a long time in France the author of † Rhadamiſtus ready to periſh for hunger: and the ſon of one of the greateſt men § our country ever gave birth to, and who was beginning to run the noble career which his father had ſet him, would have been reduced to the extremes of miſery, had he not been patronized by Mr. Fagon.

* Secretary for Jamaica. † Mr. de Crebillon. § Racine.

But the circumſtance which moſtly encourages the arts in England, is the great veneration which is paid them. The picture of the prime miniſter hangs over the chimney of his own cloſet, but I have ſeen that of Mr. Pope in twenty noblemens houſes. Sir Iſaac Newton was revered in his life time, and had a due reſpect paid to him after his death; the greateſt men in the nation diſputing who ſhould have the honour of holding up his pall. Go into Weſtminſter-Abbey, and you will find, that what raiſes the admiration of the ſpectator is not the mauſoleums of the Engliſh kings, but the monuments, which the gratitude of the nation has erected to perpetuate the memory of thoſe illuſtrious men who contributed to its glory. We view their ſtatues in that abbey in the ſame manner, as thoſe of Sophocles, Plato and other immortal perſonages were viewed in Athens; and I am perſwaded, that the bare ſight of thoſe glorious monuments, has fired more than one breaſt, and been the occaſion of their becoming great men.

The Engliſh have even been reproached with paying too extravagant honours to mere merit, and cenſured for interring the celebrated actreſs Mrs. Oldfield in Weſtminſter-Abbey, with almoſt the ſame pomp as Sir Iſaac Newton. Some pretend that the Engliſh had paid her theſe great funeral honours, purpoſely to make us more ſtrongly ſenſible of the barbarity and

injuſtice which they object to us, for having buried Mademoiſelle le Couvreur ignominiouſly in the fields.

But be aſſured from me, that the Engliſh were prompted by no other principle, in burying Mrs Oldfield in Weſtminſter-Abbey, than their good ſenſe. They are far from being ſo ridiculous as to brand with infamy an art which has immortalized an Euripides and a Sophocles; or to exclude from the body of their citizens a ſet of people whoſe buſineſs is to ſet off, with the utmoſt grace of ſpeech and action, thoſe pieces which the nation is proud of.

Under the reign of Charles the firſt, and in the beginning of the civil wars raiſed by a number of rigid fanatics, who at laſt were the victims to it, a great many pieces were publiſhed againſt theatrical and other ſhews, which were attacked with the greater virulence, becauſe that monarch and his queen, daughter to Henry the fourth of France, were paſſionately fond of them.

One Mr. Prynne, a man of moſt furiouſly ſcrupulous principles, who would have thought himſelf damned had he wore a caſſock inſtead of a ſhort cloak, and have been glad to ſee one half of mankind cut the other to pieces for the glory of God, and the propaganda fide; took it into his head to write a moſt wretched ſatire againſt ſome pretty good comedies, which were exhibited very innocently every night before

their Majeſties. He quoted the authority of the Rabbi's, and ſome paſſages from St. Bonaventure, to prove that the OEdipus of Sophocles was the work of the evil ſpirit; that Terence was excommunicated ipſo facto; and added, that doubtleſs Brutus, who was a very ſevere Janſeniſt, aſſaſſinated Julius Caeſar, for no other reaſon, but becauſe he, who was pontifex maximus, preſumed to write a tragedy, the ſubject of which was OEdipus. Laſtly, he declared that all who frequented the theatre were excommunicated, as they thereby renounced their baptiſm. This was caſting the higheſt inſult on the King and all the royal family; and as the Engliſh loved their prince at that time, they could not bear to hear a writer talk of excommunicating him, though they themſelves afterwards cut his head off. Prynne was ſummoned to appear before the ſtar-chamber; his wonderful book, from which father Le Brun ſtole his, was ſentenced to be burnt by the common hangman, and himſelf to loſe his ears. His tryal is now extant.

The Italians are far from attempting to caſt a blemiſh on the opera, or to excommunicate Signior Seneſino or Signora Cuzzoni. With regard to myſelf, I could preſume to wiſh that the magiſtrates would ſuppreſs I know not what contemptible pieces written againſt the ſtage. For when the Engliſh and Italians hear, that we brand with the greateſt mark of infa-

my an art in which we excel; that we excommunicate perſons who receive ſalaries from the king; that we condemn as impious a ſpectacle exhibited in convents and monaſteries; that we diſhonour ſports in which Lewis the fourteenth, and Lewis the fifteenth performed as actors: that we give the title of the devil's works, to pieces which are received by magiſtrates of the moſt ſevere character, and repreſented before a virtuous queen; when, I ſay, foreigners are told of this inſolent conduct, this contempt for the royal authority, and this Gothic ruſticity which ſome preſume to call Chriſtian ſeverity, what an idea muſt they entertain of our nation! And how will it be poſſible for them to conceive, either that our laws give a ſanction to an art which is declared infamous, or that ſome perſons dare to ſtamp with infamy an art which receives a ſanction from the laws, is rewarded by kings, cultivated and encouraged by the greateſt men, and admired by whole nations! And that father Le Brune's impertinent libel againſt the ſtage, is ſeen in a bookſeller's ſhop, ſtanding the very next to the immortal labours of Racine, of Corneille, of Moliere, etc!

LETTER XXIV.

OF THE ROYAL SOCIETY, AND OTHER ACADEMIES.

THE Engliſh had an academy of ſciences many years before us; but then it is not under ſuch prudent regulations as ours: the only reaſon of which very poſſibly is, becauſe it was founded before the Academy of Paris; for had it been founded after, it would very probably have adapted ſome of the ſage laws of the former, and improved upon others.

Two things, and thoſe the moſt eſſential to man, are wanting in the Royal Society of London, I mean rewards and laws. A ſeat in the Academy at Paris is a ſmall, but ſecure fortune to a Geometrician or a Chemiſt; but this is ſo far from being the caſe at London, that the ſeveral members of the Royal Society, are at a continual, though indeed ſmall expence. Any man in England who declares himſelf a lover of the mathematics and natural philoſophy, and expreſſes an inclination to be a member of the Royal Society, is immediately elected into it †.

† The reader will call to mind that theſe letters were written about 1728 or 30. ſince which time the

But in France it is not enough that a man who aſpires to the honour of being a member of the academy, and of receiving the royal ſtipend, has a love for the ſciences; he muſt at the ſame time be deeply ſkilled in them; and is obliged to diſpute the ſeat with competitors who are ſo much the more formidable as they are fired by a principle of glory, by intereſt, by the difficulty itſelf, and by that inflexibility of mind, which is generally found in thoſe who devote themſelves to that pertinacious ſtudy, the mathematics.

The Academy of Sciences is prudently confined to the ſtudy of nature, and, indeed, this is a field ſpacious enough for fifty or threeſcore perſons to range in. That of London mixes indiſcriminately literature with phyſics; but methinks the founding an academy merely for the polite arts is more judicious, as it prevents confuſion, and the joining, in ſome meaſure, of heterogeneals, ſuch as a diſſertation on the head-dreſſes of the Roman ladies, with an hundred or more new curves.

As there is very little order and regularity in the Royal Society, and not the leaſt encouragement; and that the academy of Paris is

names of the ſeveral candidates are, by a law of the Royal Society, poſted up in it, in order that a choice may be made of ſuch perſons only as are qualified to be members. The celebrated Mr. de Fontenelle had the honour to paſs through this Ordeal.

on a quite different foot, it is no wonder that our tranſactions are drawn up in a more juſt and beautiful manner than thoſe of the Engliſh. Soldiers who are under a regular diſcipline, and beſides well paid, muſt neceſſarily, at laſt, perform more glorious atchievements than others who are mere voluntiers. It muſt indeed be confeſſed that the Royal Society boaſt their Newton, but then he did not owe his knowledge and diſcoveries to that body; ſo far from it, that the latter were intelligible to very few of his fellow-members. A genius like that of Sir Iſaac belonged to all the academies in the world, becauſe all had a thouſand things to learn of him.

The celebrated Dean Swift formed a deſign, in the latter end of the late Queen's reign, to found an academy for the Engliſh tongue upon the model of that of the French. This project was promoted by the late earl of Oxford, lord high treaſurer, and much more by the lord Bolingbroke, ſecretary of ſtate, who had the happy talent of ſpeaking without premeditation in the parliament-houſe, with as much purity as dean Swift writ in his cloſet, and who would have been the ornament and protector of that academy. Thoſe only would have been choſe members of it, whoſe works will laſt as long as the Engliſh tongue, ſuch as dean Swift, Mr. Prior, whom we ſaw here inveſted with a public character, and whoſe fame

in England is equal to that of La Fontaine in France; Mr. Pope the Engliſh Boileau, Mr. Congreve who may be called their Moliere, and ſeveral other eminent perſons whoſe names I have forgot; all theſe would have raiſed the glory of that body to a great height, even in its infancy. But queen Anne being ſnatched ſuddenly from the world, the Whigs were reſolved to ruin the protectors of the intended academy, a circumſtance that was of the moſt fatal conſequence to polite literature. The members of this academy would have had a very great advantage over thoſe who firſt formed that of the French; for Swift, Prior, Congreve, Dryden, Pope, Addiſon, etc. had fixed the Engliſh tongue by their writings: whereas Chapelain, Colletet, Caſſaigne, Faret, Perrin, Cotin, our firſt academicians, were a diſgrace to their country; and ſo much ridicule is now attached to their very names, that if an author of ſome genius in this age had the misfortune to be called Chapelain or Cotin, he would be under a neceſſity of changing his name.

One circumſtance, to which the Engliſh academy ſhould eſpecially have attended, is, to have preſcribed to themſelves occupations of a quite different kind from thoſe with which our academicians amuſe themſelves. A wit of this country aſked me for the memoirs of the French academy. I anſwered, they have no memoirs, but have printed threeſcore or four

ſcore volumes in quarto of compliments. The gentleman peruſed one or two of them, but without being able to underſtand the ſtyle in which they were written, though he underſtood all our good authors perfectly. All, ſays he, I ſee in theſe elegant diſcourſes is, that the member elect having aſſured the audience that his predeceſſor was a great man, that cardinal Richelieu was a very great man, that the chancellor Seguier was a pretty great man; that Lewis the fourteenth was a more than great man, the director anſwers in the very ſame ſtrain, and adds, that the member elect may alſo be a ſort of great man, and that himſelf, in quality of director, muſt alſo have ſome ſhare in this greatneſs.

The cauſe why all theſe academical diſcourſes have unhappily done ſo little honour to this body is evident enough. *Vitium eſt temporis potius quam hominis.* The fault is owing to the age rather than to particular perſons. It grew up inſenſibly into a cuſtom, for every academician to repeat theſe elogiums at his reception; it was laid down as a kind of law, that the public ſhould be indulged from time to time the ſullen ſatisfaction of yawning over theſe productions. If the reaſon ſhould afterwards be ſought, why the greateſt geniuſes who have been incorporated into that body have ſometimes made the worſt ſpeeches; I anſwer, that it is wholly owing to a ſtrong propenſion,

the gentleman in queſtion had to ſhine, and to diſplay a thread-bare, worn-out ſubject in a new and uncommon light. The neceſſity of ſaying ſomething, the perplexity of having nothing to ſay, and a deſire of being witty, are three circumſtances which alone are capable of making even the greateſt writer ridiculous. Theſe gentlemen, not being able to ſtrike out any new thoughts, hunted after a new play of words, and delivered themſelves without thinking at all; in like manner as people who ſhould ſeem to chew with great eagerneſs, and make as though they were eating, at the ſame time that they were juſt ſtarved.

It is a law in the French academy, to publiſh all thoſe diſcourſes by which only they are known, but they ſhould rather make a law never to print any of them.

But the academy of the Belles Lettres have a more prudent and more uſeful object, which is, to preſent the public with a collection of tranſactions that abound with curious reſearches and critiques. Theſe tranſactions are already eſteemed by foreigners; and it were only to be wiſhed, that ſome ſubjects in them had been more thoroughly examined, and that others had not been treated at all. As for inſtance, we ſhould have been very well ſatisfied had they omitted I-know-not-what diſſertation on the prerogative of the right hand over the left; and ſome others, which though not pub-

ſiſhed under ſo ridiculous a title, are yet written on ſubjects that are almoſt as frivolous and ſilly.

The academy of ſciences, in ſuch of their reſearches as are of a more difficult kind and a more ſenſible uſe, embrace the knowlege of nature and the improvement of the arts. We may preſume that ſuch profound, ſuch uninterrupted purſuits as theſe, ſuch exact calculations, ſuch refined diſcoveries, ſuch extenſive and exalted views, will, at laſt, produce ſomething that may prove of advantage to the univerſe. Hitherto, as we have obſerved together, the moſt uſeful diſcoveries have been made in the moſt barbarous times. One would conclude that the buſineſs of the moſt enlightened ages and the moſt learned bodies, is, to argue and debate on things which were invented by ignorant people. We know exactly the angle which the ſail of a ſhip is to make with the keel, in order to its ſailing better; and yet Columbus diſcovered America, without having the leaſt idea of the property of this angle: however I am far from inferring from hence, that we are to confine ourſelves merely to a blind practice, but happy it were, would naturaliſts and geometricians unite, as much as poſſible, the practice with the theory.

Strange, but ſo it is, that thoſe things which reflect the greateſt honour on the human mind, are frequently of the leaſt benefit to it! A man

who underſtands the four fundamental rules of arithmetic, aided by a little good ſenſe ſhall amaſs prodigious wealth in trade, ſhall become a Sir Peter Delme, a Sir Richard Hopkins, a Sir Gilbert Heathcote, whilſt a poor algebraiſt ſpends his whole life in ſearching for aſtoniſhing properties and relations in numbers, which at the ſame time are of no manner of uſe, and will not acquaint him with the nature of exchanges. This is very nearly the caſe with moſt of the arts; there is a certain point beyond which, all reſearches ſerve to no other purpoſe, than merely to delight an inquiſitive mind. Thoſe ingenious and uſeleſs truths may be compared to ſtars, which, by being placed at too great a diſtance, cannot afford us the leaſt light.

With regard to the French academy, how great a ſervice would they do to literature, to the language, and the nation, if, inſtead of publiſhing a ſet of compliments annually, they would give us new editions of the valuable works written in the age of Lewis the fourteenth, purged from the ſeveral errors of diction which are crept into them! There are many of theſe errors in Corneille and Moliere, but thoſe in La Fontaine are very numerous. Such as could not be corrected, might at leaſt be pointed out. By this means, as all the Europeans read thoſe works, they would teach them our language in its utmoſt purity, which

by that means, would be fixed to a lasting standard; and valuable French books, being then printed at the king's expence, would prove one of the most glorious monuments the nation could boast. I have been told that Boileau formerly made this proposal, and that it has since been revived by a † gentleman eminent for his genius, his fine sense, and just taste for criticism; but this thought has met with the fate of many other useful projects, of being applauded and neglected.

† L'Abbe de Rothelin of the French academy.

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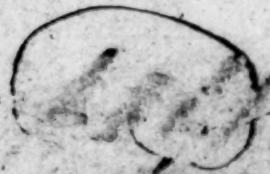

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